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YOUR SOUL'S SALVATION

Instructions on
Personal Holiness

BY

REV. EDWARD F. GARESCHE, S.J.

Author of "Your Interests Eternal,"
"Your Neighbor and You," etc.



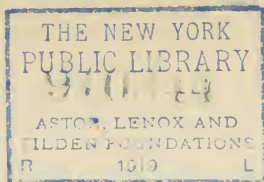
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Archbishop of New York.

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TO THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
CAUSE OF OUR JOY

PREFACE

THE short instructions on personal holiness which go to make up this little book have for the most part appeared in the pages of *The Queen's Work* under the heading "The Month's Thought." The reception they have met in that form has been so favorable, and so many readers have written to express their appreciation of them, that it has been decided to accept the multiplied suggestions and print them in a convenient book.

Whoever may be helped by these simple suggestions and reflections to take a step nearer to God and to heaven is asked to say a prayer for the writer.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Preface	5
When You Awake	9
On Meditation	17
Spiritual Reading	25
The Blessings of Daily Mass	31
Concerning Prayer	39
What Your Mind Feeds On	44
A Little Better	50
Effective Resolutions	57
Suffering	67
The Poor Souls	78
The Feast of Generous Love	88
Especially Yours	98
The Third Vocation	106
The Spirit of Sacrifice	116

	PAGE
Everybody Does	126
The Service of Eminence	131
One Man's Way	134
Uncomfortable People	138
Because You Are a Catholic	142
The Man of One Talent	145
Just Going To	148
Make Believe	150

YOUR SOUL'S SALVATION

WHEN YOU AWAKE

OUR waking hour is more important than we ever dream. It has in itself the keynote of the day. When we first open our eyes in the morning, what do we think of, what do we resolve? Our acts and thoughts are so linked together that upon this first moment depends the color and the action of the following hours.

Great wisdom, then, to give those first moments to Him to whom we wish the whole day to go—to God. Most of us, when we awake, are inclined to cast a half-conscious glance over the day and see what it has in store for us. Out of our sleepy eyes we look forward through the waking hours and speculate and plan. If there is any special good fortune in store for us, it makes us cheerful. If we anticipate a coming sorrow, we grow sad.

Now, whether sorrow or joy is coming to us, the wisest thing we can do is to give it all

over from the beginning into the Hands and into the Heart of God. Our first thought is to be a loving thought of God which will consecrate our mind and inspire our thoughts through all the day. Our first act of the will is to be an offering of the day with all its thoughts and words and actions in union with His Sacred Heart and with the Heart of His Blessed Mother and with the tremendous sacrifice of the Mass which He offers on so many altars every morning. This intention, never withdrawn, and, better still, often renewed during our waking hours, will make Christ live in us and let us live in Him.

Besides the Morning Offering, there is another most blessed and fruitful practice which we should all resolve upon and which begins at the waking hour. It is called by spiritual writers the examen of conscience, and it is practised in this way: After we have offered our thoughts and words and acts to God, we cast a glance over the coming day and make a strong and earnest purpose to serve God faithfully all during the hours. We foresee perhaps some special difficulty we shall meet in the way of goodness,

and resolve and pray to overcome it. We anticipate some special occasion of doing good and make up our mind gladly to embrace it. Then, in a little prayer, we thank God for His blessings already given, ask pardon for our past offenses, and beg His grace that during the coming day we may go forward in His service and not offend Him.

This will take only a few moments when we wake, and it is the first part of our examination of conscience. The hours run swiftly and bring us to noon—a splendid time to pause and look backward and forward. This will be the second part of our examen. At some quiet moment we once more think of the good resolutions of the morning. How have we carried them out? We run over rapidly hour by hour, ask ourselves what we have done for God and what we have done against Him. “Give an account of thy stewardship.” We are anticipating God’s judgment. A good order for our thoughts is this: First, a brief act of thanksgiving for God’s goodness during the morning. Second, a prayer for light that we may know how we have served or

offended Him. Third, the brief review of the hours of the morning. Fourth, an act of deep sorrow for whatever sins we have committed and finally an earnest little prayer for grace to serve God better in the future.

After this little interview with God, you will feel a new courage and peace. Then renew your offering and resolutions of the morning, and resolve most earnestly to serve God with more diligence and love from noon until dark.

The afternoon runs on and brings us swiftly to night. The hour of bedtime comes. Now is the time to complete your daily examination. After your prayer is said and before you go to sleep, run briefly again over the five points which you touched on at your midday examen, a prayer of thanks, a prayer for light, then go over the hours of the afternoon and see in what you have offended God and in what you have pleased Him. Then a brief but fervent act of sorrow and finally an earnest prayer that to-morrow you may make up for to-day and that you may go forward in praising and loving God. If this is your last thought at night, you will

wake up in the morning with thoughts of God in your mind and ready to renew again this holy and simple progress toward goodness.

This practice is most earnestly commended by all spiritual writers, and it has done wonders in bringing ordinary Christians to heights of goodness. It consecrates the whole day to God, and at what slight expense! Only three moments are needed, at morning, noon, and night, and it will cost you no time and very little effort to give these moments to God. Yet if He sees you in earnest in this holy practice, He will enrich your whole day with many graces. Begin this very day and resolve that to-morrow your waking hour will be given to God, that at noon and night and all successive days, you will practise the fruitful activity of this general examen of conscience.

There is another part to this devotion of the examen of conscience, and it is called the particular examen.

In the particular examen we set ourselves to practise some virtue, or to root out some special fault. It is an old remark that every

man has some predominant weakness, some central and foundation fault which shows itself in all his sins. With some it is an inordinate pride, with others a love of pleasure, with others still a love of ease. These besetting sins have been classified, as it were, under the heads of the seven deadly sins of Pride, Covetousness, Lust, Anger, Gluttony, Envy, and Sloth. By thinking a bit over our own misdeeds, we shall easily see to which one of these sins we are most inclined. There then is our dangerous enemy, and to obtain the opposite virtue should be our most earnest object and desire.

If our fault is a very glaring one and may be observed and give scandal to others, then we should attack it directly by means of a particular examen. But if it is a fault which shows itself more in sins of omission than of commission, it is better sometimes not to attack it directly, but to try to remedy it by cultivating the opposite virtue. Thus, for instance, if we are given to outbursts of anger, our particular examen should be directed toward correcting our temper. But if we are inclined to the sin of sloth or that

of selfishness, then we should do better to cultivate the opposite virtue, and to make our particular examen bear on being energetic and industrious, or on doing good to others.

What is the particular examen? It consists in this, that at three times or moments, the hour of waking, midday, and the hour of retiring, we join to our general examination of conscience this following practice: After going over the five points described, we should call briefly to mind the special fault which we have determined to correct, or the special virtue we have resolved to practise. In the morning we make a strong resolve to practise this virtue or correct the fault so many times during the course of the morning. At noon, we carefully recall how many times we have fulfilled our resolution, trying to make the number of faults decrease and the number of acts of virtue increase from day to day, and from examen to examen.

It is useful to note down in a little book the results of our examens, and to make comparison day by day. This will give added

interest and will afford a useful check on our progress. At night again we make a review of the time since noon, to discover our progress, then we thank God for His kind assistance, ask His pardon for our faults, and make a fresh resolve for the coming day.

This practice of the particular examen is of immense use in correcting our faults and implanting virtues. We should keep manfully on until we find the fault we were working at is satisfactorily under control, and the virtue we aimed at is fairly implanted in us. Then we should go on to the next defect in our character, and try to remove it in the same practical way.

ON MEDITATION

MANY good folk grow pale at the word "meditation." They picture to themselves tedious hours of silence; violent efforts to repel distractions, and laborious strainings of will and understanding—in short, a very doleful and tiresome proceeding altogether. Then, they mentally conclude, "Meditation is not for me!" All this is a very unfortunate misconception. Meditation is not tiresome nor doleful. It is not an exclusive privilege of great saints. It is really a cheerful, interesting and rather commonplace proceeding, and every good Christian should meditate a while each day, just as every good Christian should spend some time each day in prayer.

What, then, is meditation, stripped of all its imaginary difficulties? It is simply using our memory and our understanding to realize more deeply some truth of faith; and then, most important of all, using our will to make good resolutions concerning it.

Let us take a simple example. Suppose I

say the Our Father, running rapidly over the words, not thinking at all what they mean. "Our Father, who art in Heaven," and all the rest to the very end. I have said a prayer with my lips, and that is all. But suppose that before I begin to say the "Our Father" I stand quietly for a while, or kneel, or sit, and think to myself: "What am I about to do? In whose presence am I going? What am I about to say? Then, for a minute or two, I put myself in the presence of the all-good, the all-loving, the all-powerful God, creator of Heaven and earth, master of life and of death, who made me out of nothing by an act of His all-powerful will, who constantly keeps me in existence, as a loving mother keeps her weak babe from falling by holding him close in her arms. I stand before this infinite God, rest for a moment or two, and then speak to God and say: "Heavenly Father, I am about to consecrate a little time to You. Though most unworthy, I come before Your adorable presence, to praise and reverence and love You. By the power of Your Holy Spirit, pour forth the light of Your grace

into my mind, that I may see more clearly, and realize more deeply, the truths of Faith. And rain down the fire of Your grace into my will, that I may make earnest, strong, and persevering resolutions to love and serve You more faithfully.”

This recollection and this prayer need only take a couple of minutes. It puts us in the presence of God, and obtains His help for our meditation. Then we take some form of prayer, the Our Father, for instance, but instead of saying it rapidly, with our lips merely, we begin to remember, to think and to will about the great truths contained in it. We commence with the first few words. We say very slowly, with immense reverence, and a memory of whom we are addressing, “Our Father, who art in Heaven.” Then we pause and sweetly dwell upon these words. First we remember who was it gave us this prayer, the Our Father. It was Our Lord Himself, in answer to that request of the Apostles, “Teach us to pray.” The Apostles had heard that John the Baptist taught his disciples to pray, and so they asked Our Lord, the eternal

truth and wisdom, "Lord, teach us to pray." Then Our Lord, looking upon them, began the words of this most sublime prayer, composed by His own Sacred Heart, which will echo from the hearts of millions on millions of holy souls until the end of the world. How eager we should be to understand some of the wonderful and holy meaning of this chosen prayer of the Heart of Christ.

"Our Father, who art in Heaven." We say the words over again very reverently. To whom are we speaking? To the Lord of Heaven and earth, and to our Father. From Him is named all fatherhood, in Heaven and on earth. He is more truly our Father than is our earthly father, because He has loved us for all eternity; has prepared Heaven and earth for our coming; has created us out of nothing with infinite love and infinite power, and watches us, feeds us, clothes us, day by day, with the love of an infinite Father. And since He is our Father, He will listen with fatherly tenderness to the words of His children.

As we repeat these words, "Our Father, who art in Heaven," we, as it were, cause

Him to lean forward on His everlasting throne with loving attention, to hear the slightest prayer of us, His children. We have the ear of God. We are in the presence-chamber of the Most High. We hear Him say, as His Son said in the flesh: "Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." We ask into the ear of God. He will hear our petition.

We repeat the words over once again, "Our Father, who art in Heaven." What a world of consolation in those four last words, "who art in Heaven." Our Father is in Heaven. Heaven, therefore, is our home. We sometimes fancy that our home is here on earth, but here we are away from home. Our home is with our Father, who is in Heaven.

So we go on, striving to realize more and more the meaning of these most meaning words, "Our Father, who art in Heaven."

We have been using our memory and intellect. We have been thinking and remembering. Now, it remains to use the highest of our faculties, our will. With all our

might, with all our heart, we make an act of love for God, our Father who is in Heaven. We love that Heavenly Father with all the affection of a dutiful child. It may help us to put that love into words, not many words, not carefully chosen, not making a speech to our Heavenly Father, but in short, earnest, simple phrases coming from the heart. "Oh, my God, I love Thee!" "My God and my All!" "Heavenly Father, I love Thee as a dutiful child." Then, having stirred up in our hearts the greatest possible love for God, we should bend our minds to thinking: "What shall I do for this great and holy Father? How shall I serve Him better? How shall I love Him more devotedly? What faults are there in my life which displease His fatherly heart? What good deeds should I resolve on to please my Father, who is in Heaven?"

This is the important part of our meditation. If we realize that God is truly our Father; if we truly love Him, we shall wish most earnestly to serve Him with greater fervor and devotion. We will do good deeds to please our Father. Finally, after

we have made good resolutions and offered them earnestly to God, let us encourage ourselves with the words, "Who art in Heaven." Our Father is in Heaven. He waits there in that abode of endless peace, joy, and holiness, to reward and bless us forever. The smallest service which we render Him here on earth will be repaid a hundredfold in Heaven with treasures of unspeakable joy and glory, pressed down and flowing over the measure of our hearts. If He is our Father here on earth how wonderfully will He be our Father in Heaven! With what bounty, with what goodness, with what generous omnipotence, He will spend the treasures of His Godhead to make us, His children, happy for all eternity!

So we may dwell for moments, or for hours, on these first words of the Our Father. We should dwell there as long as we find sweetness and consolation. Be in no hurry to go on to another point of your meditation. Follow the rule of the wise prospector after precious metals. He goes about, digging and digging here and there in the soil, but when he comes to a vein of gold he wanders

about no longer. There he stays, digging and digging until he has gathered all the precious metal. Then only he seeks about again for a new lode.

SPIRITUAL READING

THERE are certain tried and time-honored practices which have been found to help mightily to the spiritual progress of men and women who live in religious communities. These practices answer to needs of our human nature, and they have grown out of the experience of generations, so that they will help greatly too to the spiritual progress and perfection of Sodalists living in the world.

One of these practices is what is called spiritual reading. Every one knows how literary reading cultivates the mind. To think over again the thoughts of great masters of prose and of verse profoundly stimulates the imagination, and lifts us nearer to their mental plane.

Good reading is the door to correct thinking in the sphere of letters. It has no less efficacy in the supernatural sphere. God's grace flows mightily in upon us through the channel of good books. When we read the life of a saint, we associate with him,

live through his life and profit by his good example. From the writings of holy men we drink in the quintessence of their great meditations, their fervent prayers, and holy thoughts.

Spiritual reading has flourished in all ages among those who truly wished to grow in sanctity. But there was never a time, perhaps, when it was so urgently needed as to-day. For a great danger to good people of our time is distraction. A multiplicity of silly and vain thoughts screen from us the beauty of Heaven and of the hereafter, shut out from our soul the light of God's inspirations and keep our thoughts and our spirit grovelling on the ground. We must somehow open our hearts to supernatural thoughts, clear away the cloud of distractions, and see the light of the life to come.

A most efficacious cure for our distraction and for the dearth of good thoughts is spiritual reading. Choose your spiritual books as you choose your other reading. Go to a Catholic library, or to the book-case of your Sodality, and look over the volumes or ask the advice of the Director. Try always to

find something that will interest and help you. We must either find or make for ourselves an interest in spiritual reading. We must accustom ourselves to like holy books.

Now the first step toward this is to get a holy book that we like. If we are interested in the book we are reading, the grace of God will find easier entrance. Interest rouses the mind, wards off distractions, helps the memory, warms the will. Holy things are in themselves intensely interesting. They have to do with heaven and hell, two of the most permanently interesting subjects in the world; they have to do with God, who should be our supreme interest and desire. The reason that we are not interested in these things is that we know so little of them. An Algonquin savage would be very little interested in Paris if you were to mention that city to him. The reason is that he knows so little about Paris. But if you were to put him through a course of reading, supposing that were possible, which would introduce him to that great city, home of great sinners and great saints, tell him its history, full of tears and laughter, and fill

his mind with the legendary lore which clings about Notre Dame, the Tuileries and the Madeleine, the name of Paris would thereafter fill him with interest and attention. He would wish to know more of the great city because he already knows so much.

It is the same with us and holy things. We are not interested in them because we know so little of them. If we would read good books, the lives of the saints, the Imitation of Christ, the Scriptures, we should grow to take a deep interest in eternal and lasting things. The fashion of this world passeth away, and all the momentous trifles which rise and fall in the columns of our papers vanish like bubbles in the water. But life and death, God and eternity, the soul and its last destiny—these things remain forever and forever.

When we read light and trivial books and papers, we converse for the most part with the world, the flesh, and the devil, and we shall have little consolation from them. When we read the lives of the saints, we speak with God and His angels, with the heroes of humanity, with Jerome and Au-

gustine, Agnes and Cecilia, and Mary Magdalen and Mary the Mother of Christ. Our company deeply affects our life and soul, here and hereafter. Let us become well acquainted with the saints, and then we shall enjoy their company.

Again we have little conception, unless we have already made a practice of spiritual reading, of the consolation and help that await us in such books as the *Imitation of Christ* and St. Francis de Sales' "Introduction to a Devout Life." Very often, in times of sorrow and anxiety, men turn to some appealing book to help them forget their tedious and painful thoughts. Light fiction, poetry, drama, do indeed serve to distract our mind, but they do not console the heart. They give a passing relief, as a narcotic would, but leave no residue of strength, courage, and lasting resolution.

But spiritual books strengthen and console the spirit. They set our soul to rights, form our minds and hearts to heroic fortitude and courage, give us the viewpoint of the saints. They leave us not only refreshed but stronger, more loving toward God, more

charitable toward our fellow-men, better disposed to bear our trials with a Christian spirit. The secret of the saints, the heavenly alchemy by which they turned sorrows into joys, trials into blessings is the great burning eager love of God which filled their hearts. Spiritual reading will inflame our souls with a like charity. For the writings of the saints are text-books of the Love of God.

THE BLESSINGS OF DAILY MASS

How strange it is, believing as we do that the sacrifice of the Mass is in very deed the sacrifice of Calvary offered again for our salvation, that we do not crowd the churches every morning and come again and again to Holy Mass! One would think that even the most busy and distracted men, if they even faintly realized the wonder and price of a single hearing of the Mass, would manage somehow, even at the cost of the greatest sacrifice, to get to Mass every morning, so that the churches scarcely could contain them. How more than strange to see, even in good and fervent parishes, a scanty sprinkling of worshipers assisting at this tremendous sacrifice—not so many as one would find at even the dulllest political meeting, or in the stuffy atmosphere of a movie show!

Clearly we do not appreciate enough the splendid gift of God whereby He renews so many times for us the sacrifice of Calvary. Consider what it has cost the most generous

Heart of Christ to prepare for us this morning offering. The rite itself is obscure; the whispered words of the priest, full of tremendous import though they are, fall only as a murmur on the ear; the church may be but a poor place, and none too comfortable or clean, but the deed done there every morning passes all words in precious grandeur, in heavenly efficacy, because it is a God's offering of His life and blood to God!

Each several Mass has cost Our Lord His life to pay for it. Every several one is worth in itself as much as the sacrifice of His life and blood is worth. Whatever the offering of His whole being on Calvary is worth in the eyes of His Heavenly Father, so much and no less is worth every offering of the Mass.

Consider how Christ Himself must consider the hearing of a single Mass. Whether it be said in the most gorgeous of churches, with sublime music for its accompaniment and all the pomp of art and ritual to give it outward splendor, or in the heart of some wild wood, or in the dingy slum of a foul city, stripped of every outward beauty, it is

to Him as precious as His own blood, as sacred as His death, as efficacious as His passion. It is the very true and literal repetition, not merely in loving remembrance, not only in holy symbol, but in literal truth and utter efficacy of the selfsame offering He made on the cross. This offering He truly makes again, but in an unbloody manner, at every single repetition of the most holy, the most precious and sweet and heavenly sacrifice of the Mass.

How the most tender heart of Christ must yearn to see throngs of His Catholic people gathered around the altar at every single repetition of this most dear and efficacious sacrifice. Having paid no less than His whole humanity, offered up in the painful throes of an awful passion and death to give the Mass its exceeding efficacy, how must He not desire to see us prize and take to the full the boundless and admirable treasure it contains for us? What a sight is it for Him to look from the altar, when He has with infinite love and yearning consummated this masterpiece of His boundless love, and see there a handful of His people—a corporal's

guard, where there should be a whole army of loving worshipers, eager to partake in what His love has prepared for them.

For—and this we should never forget—it is Christ Himself who offers every single Mass that is said or shall be said until the consummation of the world. Our Faith so teaches us—that He is with equal truth both priest and victim. The minister who stands at the altar and utters the words of oblation speaks not in his own person, but in the name and with the power of Christ, “This is My body”; and by the omnipotence of God the bread is forthwith changed to Christ’s body. “This is My blood,” and as at the Last Supper, so here also the wine is changed into the true and real blood of Christ. Ah, if it is worth the while of our Divine Saviour so often and so unwearyingly to consummate this marvelous sacrifice, is it not worth our while to make even a considerable effort to assist at Holy Mass often and every day?

Since Christ Himself is always the Priest and the Victim, the efficacy of the Mass never diminishes nor increases. The Mass that was said this very morning some few

squares from your door—it may be within a five-minute walk from where you sat forgetful—is as great in its supernatural efficacy as that first Mass which Our Lord offered to His Heavenly Father in the shadow of the Supper Room on the eve of His passion. If you had bestirred yourself to rise up and go to Mass this morning, it would have been as though you had stood among the twelve and heard Him say for the first time what He said this morning with the same meaning and the same efficacy: “This is My body; this is My blood.”

The Mass is the most efficacious atonement for our sins. We have sore need to repay the justice of God and to avert His rightful anger. How often we have offended, and what slight atonement we make for the evil we have done! Therefore, unless we find mercy in God’s sight, how dreadful may our punishment be! How easily we sin, how hardly we make atonement! But in the Holy Sacrifice there is continual opportunity to appease the anger of God. It is the unbloody repetition of that selfsame sacrifice that His Divine Son

offered on the cross for the salvation of sinners. In this tremendous offering behold once more the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world. Cheerfully shall we go before the judgment-seat of God if we have often knelt before His altar and offered Him the body and blood of His own Son in atonement for our transgressions. God gives us this easy and most efficacious way of averting His punishments to come; but if we neglect His gracious gift, weary and long may be our pain in purgatory.

Again, the Mass is an unfailing means of drawing down on us the bounty of God. Our puny prayers gain a glorious efficacy if we join them with the prayers of Christ. The Mass is His supreme prayer, of adoration and atonement, of praise and supplication, and when we assist at Mass we join ourselves to the heart of Our Saviour, pleading with irresistible efficacy for us on the cross. We are solicitous about many things. Our health, our fortunes, our future, the welfare of those we love, give us many an anxious hour and many a pang of heart. Why not borrow the very omnipotence of

God to help ourselves and those who depend upon us, by joining our prayers each day with the most efficacious sacrifice of the Mass?

And consider that this immense benefit to our soul, this assurance of God's protection, this great comfort to the heart of Christ, will cost us no more than some half-hour in the morning, which can well be saved by a bit less slothfulness in dressing, by a few moments saved from the daily paper, by the economy of some little time from sleep. To say nothing of our love and tenderness for Our Saviour, who thinks it well worth His while to offer the Mass for us every morning, our very common sense should make us unwilling ever avoidably to miss so great a blessing so easily gained. If any favor in the way of money or pleasure were so easily gotten, what crowds would come, morning after morning!

But our chief motive for daily Mass is not self-interest nor the interest of others, but the love of Him who so patiently offers Himself for us in every poor hamlet and city, in every church and chapel, wooing us with

such patience and desire to have us come daily to Mass. And when we come we shall find it most easy and consoling to give Our Lord that other precious pledge of our love, and source of innumerable blessings, the frequent and daily Communion which is the desire of His heart.

CONCERNING PRAYER

IT is a puzzling subject for most good Christians, this subject of prayer. On the one hand, Our Lord tells us plainly in the Sacred Scriptures that He will give us whatever we ask in His name. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you." On the other hand, we sometimes see so little apparent results from our prayers. We think we have asked—and we have not received; we think we have sought—and we have not found. Sometimes, when we seem not to have prayed very hard, we obtain our petition. More often, when we think we have prayed excellently well, we seem to get nothing at all.

To clear up this difficulty, which is such a common one, we should first of all get a clear idea as to what prayer is. It comes to many thoughtful people as a surprising discovery that prayer is principally a matter of the will. When the will yearns to God, that is prayer. In proportion as the inten-

tion of the will is right and pure and strong, so is the efficacy of the prayer. Everything depends upon the state of our *will* in prayer. God looks to the will, not to the feelings or the imagination. If we realized this clearly we should find it much easier to pray, and should be much more encouraged about our prayers.

Our other faculties are not quite under our control. We can not feel devout when we wish to, nor can we keep our imagination from playing us tricks when we pray. The one faculty of our soul over which we have control is our will. We can will what we will, and so with God's grace, which is always ready for us, we are always able to pray. Our commonest mistake in this matter is to think that our feelings of devotion make our prayers pleasing to God. We may feel as dry as Our Lord did in the agony, when He was absolutely destitute of all consolation, and yet we may pray exceedingly well by willing strongly to God, as He did in His agony. Indeed, our prayer may be the more meritorious and efficacious because we *do* will strongly to God in spite of our

desolation. One loud cry of the suffering will, in moments of anguish and desolation, may move the heart of God more than hours of easy and consoling meditation.

The reason, of course, for this mistake of confounding feelings of devotion with true prayer is that earnest prayer is so often accompanied by feelings of devotion that we get to confuse the two. Then, again, devout feelings at prayer are something sensible and perceptible, whereas our will is a purely spiritual faculty, and its movements are more difficult to determine. Yet sensible devotion is only an accident of good prayer. Its essence is a strong cry of the will, in the ears of God.

To pray well, then, we need only to will well, and on the other hand, unless we will well we can not pray well. This simplifies the whole matter greatly if we understand the meaning of the words. A good will must have two qualities—it must be right and pure. It is right when it is directed straight to God. It is pure when it yearns to God alone and is not mixed with love of earthly things. Hence, when we pray, we should

endeavor to yearn to God for the good things we seek, for God's sake alone. God can not fail to hear such a prayer.

These thoughts will make more clear to us the first reason why our prayers are sometimes not answered. We do not attend to making our will right and pure. We ask God for good things which He may be ready to grant to us, but we do not ask from a right and pure intention. All of God's gifts are good, but we may seek a good gift from a wrong intention. We may ask for material blessings out of mere ill-ordered selfishness instead of asking for them as God intends, that they may help us to His service and love and to life everlasting. We may ask even for spiritual gifts from a wrong intention—self-love or vanity.

Even when our will is right and pure it may be very weak, and so our prayer is but a feeble whisper in the ears of God. We should endeavor greatly to strengthen the pleading of our will in prayer. For this it is not necessary, not even wise, to try to force our feelings. We need not attend to our feelings, but to our sovereign will. An at-

tentive consideration of our motives for asking the favor tends to strengthen our will; and so does dwelling on one point until we are inflamed with desire. Put clearly before you the favor you wish to ask of God. Dwell on your need of it, the good it will do you, and of the help it will be in serving and honoring God. Then, having attentively considered these things in your mind, focus your will upon the favor and yearn long and earnestly to God. This is the secret of prayer.

Of course, too, we must remember that God does not always grant, even to good prayers, precisely the thing asked for. He gives us, like a good Father, what is best for us, hearing our prayers as a good father hears the petitions of his child. But if we pray earnestly and sincerely, with a right and pure intention and with confidence and perseverance, our prayers can not fail of an answer. We do not ask in vain of our Father who is in Heaven.

WHAT YOUR MIND FEEDS ON

WE ARE getting very dainty, most of us, under the persistent influence of "hygiene" and "sanitation," as to what we eat and drink. One notices it amusingly, even in the signs of the restaurants. Pasteurized milk and sanitary butter and health foods and bread whereof the making is loudly advertised to be innocent of the touch of human hands, appeal to a public which twenty years ago thought as little of microbes as it did of Mars, and went about its own unhygienic way, eating and drinking where and what it listed.

We should feel a horror nowadays at the thought of just picking up our food wherever we may find it. If we were invited to buy our meat at the street stalls, blown on by dust and spotted over with flies, or to get our water from unwholesome wells sunk in the city's yards, we should protest quite vigorously.

But it is strange how obtuse we are to the infections, the malnutrition and the

poisonous rottenness to which we expose our minds. Does not the mind, too, like the body, grow like to what it feeds on? Can we habitually feed our mind on the tainted stuff about us without taking infection and poisoning our intellect and our imagination? This is no fanciful comparison. It is the honest truth. The general temper of our mind is powerfully and deeply influenced by what it feeds on. We can not hope to have clean, sound minds if we snatch our mental food here and there from every common and stale bit of print that happens to float under our notice.

If the diseases of our mind were as painful and distressing as those of our body, this thought would have a keener sting for us. Bodily pains send us to a physician who imposes a diet and corrects our foolish habits. Would that the soul had its painful symptoms, too, to send us looking for good advice to correct our mental dietary. I fancy most of us would soon discover that our minds were sick from overeating and we should hasten to some wise adviser to be set right.

If he were truly wise, the first thing our

adviser would prescribe for us would be a course of spiritual reading. He would recommend a daily bit of the Imitation, a chapter or two from the New Testament. And then if he were very wise, he would gently but firmly urge upon us to read very often the Lives of the Saints.

There are such pleasant and interesting series nowadays of Lives of the Saints. They come in cheap editions, within reach of every one's purse, and you can look at them for the asking at any Catholic book store. They are full of human interest and rich with consolation in your trials and difficulties, and reading them, you feed your mind on the most noble and glorious thoughts, the exploits of these gentle heroes. They were men and women like yourself, plagued like you with human temptations and full of human weaknesses, but they have taken the hand of God and walked by His help above the mist and the shadows into the calm and sunshine which rest on the heights of Peace.

There is no company so charming as the company of the saints. Oh, it is a great pity that uncomprehending artists have been

busy with them and made them seem to our eyes severe and forbidding or dressed them up like dolls with an impossible air of not being flesh and blood nor really human. The saints were the most charming of all human personalities. The men and women of their own time ran after them and could not have enough of their company, as the Sienese crowded about St. Catherine of Siena, as the Spaniards ran after Vincent Ferrer, the French after Francis de Sales and Vincent de Paul. St. Ignatius, too, whom we see caricatured in statues of cast iron, with an almost savage rigor in his look, was a charming gentleman of old Spain, and it is said of him and St. Francis Xavier that there was such charm in the charity of their manner that they bewitched the hearts of those who spoke with them.

They were human and lovable, no less than high and heavenly. They lived out their lives after the pattern of Our Lord, who drew the multitudes after Him, even into the desert, by His compelling charm. Whatever is pure and delightful in the human heart, whatever is noble, generous and

tender, whatever makes us in love with humanity and fills us with a hope and desire of becoming noble ourselves and realizing the best that is in us, all this can be found in its flower in the Lives of the Saints.

It is a long story how the biographers and the artists between them have given our Catholic folk a certain unhappy prejudice against the Lives of the Saints. Perhaps the truth is that the ancient Lives of Saints met the needs of the ancient time, which loved wonders more than human tenderness, and wished to paint the saints as visiting angels rather than as mortal men. They had not taken to heart that keen caution of St. Francis de Sales, himself one of the most lovable of men, who warns us: "We must take care to be good men and women before we try to be angels."

But unhappily this prejudice among Catholics against the Lives of the Saints has survived the occasion of it. There are, as we said before, new and charming series of Lives of the Saints written especially to meet the needs of our own time and suited to our modern palate. If you have not read them,

it is your own great loss and you have deprived your mind of that clean, strong food which will give it health and soundness. Let your own interest plead, together with the love of God, to induce you to retrench a little the unhealthy diet of novels, news and nonsense with which you feed your mind, and to take up, for peaceful and delightful reading, some of the small but meaty volumes which tell of the doings of the saints.

A LITTLE BETTER

IT is almost literally true, though it sounds like a paradox, that many good ordinary Christians are only a few steps from sanctity. If they would be but a little better, they could enter the ranks of the heroic servants of God and be numbered among His intimate friends. It is, indeed, one of the tragedies of the spiritual life that there are so few great lovers of God, when to love Him greatly is so easy, so plain and so simple an achievement. And the reason why the number of God's great and devoted servants is not greater is precisely this, that so many of us refuse to become just a little better than we are.

Consider your own soul. You love God, and you serve Him. You are wise enough to see that in comparison with His eternal heaven this world is but dust and ashes. You turn definitely, therefore, into the way that leads to Heaven, and you resolve to obey God's commands and devote yourself to His service. You abhor mortal sin and

think it better to lose any earthly good rather than to forfeit the friendship of your Father who is in Heaven. But as regards venial sins—deliberate little insults to God, serious enough to offend Him, but not grave enough to break off friendship with Him altogether—you are perhaps careless. While you dread mortal sin greatly and as you should, you do not fear venial sin at all, and you cheerfully go along, spattering your soul with deliberate offenses, sickening your heart with wilful violation of God's law, unmindful of the vast loss of merit here and of glory hereafter, of the grace you are wasting and the pains you are storing up for yourself here or in purgatory by these foolish and wicked, albeit venial—that is, more easily pardonable—sins.

Ah, if you could only be just a little better, and to your hatred and fear of mortal sin add likewise a true and healthy horror of deliberate venial sin! For venial sin is, after mortal sin, the greatest evil on earth. Rather than commit one deliberate venial sin it were better and wiser to brave all the sufferings and endure all the evils of the

world. The difference between a careless habit of deliberate venial sins and keeping our soul quite free, as far as our weakness will allow, from all wilful violations of the law of God even in lesser things, is the difference between ordinary goodness and sanctity. Yet to achieve this glorious victory over ourselves, to enter into the inner circle of God's especially beloved and faithful friends, we need only to make the little step from carelessness to fervor, need only be a little better and more careful to avoid deliberate venial sins.

When we come to the positive service of God, we find the same strange truth, that we need only become a little better in order to attain to holiness. For we observe already the great essentials of God's law. We fulfil the commandments of God and of the Church. We pray in due season. We perform the duties of our state of life. There is not much out of the way in anything that we have to do. Our conscience never reproaches us with any serious neglect of duty, either to God or man.

Yet, for all that, we are uneasily con-

scious that we have no very distinguished service to offer to God. There is so much imperfection in all our work. Our conscience never upbraids us with being great sinners, but it keeps quietly assuring us that we are not as saintly as we should be, or as God has a right to expect. A hundred little infidelities to duty, little self-indulgences, small lapses from the standard that we have set ourselves—these things keep rising up when we go to confession and troubling us with the consciousness that we are not serving God as our soul's welfare requires nor as His bountiful goodness has the right to expect of us.

Yet, when you consider, what little things are those that keep you from the perfect service of God! Look thoughtfully over the actions of a day. It is the little temptations that overthrow you, the small concupiscences that deter you, the petty vices that spoil the loveliness of your actions in the eyes of God. The great temptations you can throw off easily. To yield to them would be ruin. But it is the mean and worthless gratifications which cast your good resolves to earth. Per-

haps it is an ingrained habit of selfishness and self-gratification in little things that tyrannizes over you. Perhaps it is a little vice of sloth that makes your actions listless, without method, desultory, sluggish. Perhaps it is anger that flames or smolders in your heart, sending out sparks of bitterness, rancor, and impatience, and making those about you perpetually uneasy, like folk who live on the slopes of a volcano and have to speculate about the next eruption! Whatever it is, it is a little thing in itself—a fragile obstacle to greater goodness, a petty gratification to keep us from so great a good as the perfect service of God.

If we would only gather all the forces of our soul together, and cast out these petty demons of sloth, self-indulgence, vanity, anger, the plague of little vices that keep us from greater love of God! By being just a little better, what vast advances we should make! Are the contemptible and passing gratifications that we achieve by these indulgences and yieldings to our lower nature any compensation for the losses of merit and glory that they inflict on our soul?

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It will be a profitable undertaking for us to examine frankly our usual behavior, and to determine for ourselves what particular pet faults and small vices spoil our daily actions and keep us from the perfect service of God. Then we can resolve definitely, and in detail, to be just that little bit better which will place us in the pathway of the saints.

By just a little more effort, prudently directed, you may advance notably in both outward and interior perfection. Do you go at your duties with an alert and cheerful promptness that carries you cleanly forward, like a runner who has a good start and is bent on winning? Or do you dawdle and delay just at the all-important beginning? "Well begun is half done" is sound and deep psychology. A brisk promptness at the very start carries us forward half through the task before we are aware of the labor, while a little sloth, only a little, often spoils the whole hour or the whole day. So here again, by being only a little better, by making a vigorous effort and conquering our sloth, we

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shall improve mightily and redeem many a precious hour.

It is so with nearly all our petty vices. To prune and clip them we need only be just a little better. "Trifles are little things," the wise saying runs, "but trifles, carefully minded, mean perfection—and perfection is no trifle." Fidelity in little things is the secret of great holiness.

EFFECTIVE RESOLUTIONS

A FRAYED and time-worn maxim, half true, half cynical, declares that the path to hell is paved with good intentions. Perhaps it is, if by intentions one means those half-hearted, unformed, and ineffective wishes to be better and to amend their evil ways that come to the most hardened of sinners when some satiety or shock of conscience arouses them to a faint fear of the punishments of God. Such watery wishes to be better only lull the mind with seeming goodness and soothe a little the stings of conscience, without either winning the sinner forgiveness or setting him to work to root out his sins. But if by good intentions one means honest resolves to root out our faults and to lead a better and a holier life, then the maxim should rather read: The path to Heaven is paved with good intentions. For it is only by making very, very many good resolutions—even though one breaks them and remakes them again and again—that

one can ever accomplish anything notable and worthy for the kingdom of heaven.

It is very foolish to be discouraged because we do not keep our good resolutions, and to give up making them, as so many do, because they find themselves compelled always to make the same ones over again, and because they get only a wee little distance forward with each earnest effort they make and with every good resolve. That is the very method of getting forward that our human nature requires; and those who get discouraged because they make and break resolutions so often have not understood the elementary principles of human progress in virtue.

We are not angels, and can not move with angelic swiftness and decision. Being men, we must act as men; and it is human to have to make many efforts before we conquer a bad habit and plant a good one in its stead. The very process of making a good and sincere resolution, definite, practical, and honestly meant, is in itself a good deed and has its own effect on the soul. It is meritorious in itself and pleases God as an evidence of our good will. And it has an influence on

our will that is incalculably precious, for it tends to root out the bad habit that we are resolving against and to strengthen the good one that we desire, to a degree far beyond what one would imagine from our mere success in keeping it. Not one good resolve, even though it is sincerely meant, but, it may be, a whole series of them is necessary so to strengthen our will that it can triumph over the contrary bad habit that has fortified itself through many acts of self-indulgence.

The reason of this lies in the fact that we are creatures of habit, and that we act not only according to what we have resolved in this or that moment of fervor, but even more from the set that our will has received from the series of our past deeds. Every action that we perform, whether good or evil, has just so much influence toward the formation of a habit; and every time that we follow a certain line of conduct it becomes just so much easier for us to do the same thing again. Physiologists explain this tendency in our bodies by speaking of paths of impulse which our actions make along the channels of control. When one performs

the same action in the same way many times, the nerves and the muscles learn their own lesson, and acquire a facility for doing the thing again, so that it becomes a second nature for us to repeat the action easily and accurately. One sees this in many lines of bodily effort. An apprentice learning his trade is really laboriously acquiring habits of doing the things of his craft. At first he has to be shown every motion, to learn painfully the right way of holding his tools, the easiest way of cutting and welding, the approved technique of the instruments which he uses. But after he has performed the same actions over and over again, it becomes a second nature with him to do the things skilfully, and he can go on with the work before him with very little mental attention, because his nerves and his muscles have acquired good habits that guide them instinctively in the work. Indeed, it would be just as hard for him to do the thing wrongly or unskilfully, now that he has the habit of doing it rightly, as it would have been for him to do it rightly in the days before he had learned his trade. It is the same in

every line of human effort—in the world of intellect and in the sphere of spiritual activities, as well as in the field of bodily labor.

Indeed, as we are now made, it is a blessing that habit is so strong in us and can supply so much for any conscious planning. We are constantly called on to do things that require no little skill, and if we were not aided by habit, we should never be equal to the occasion. Early in our life we learn how to walk, to balance ourselves, to avoid bumps and tumbles, and very often our life depends on the sureness and swiftness with which that habitual equilibrium comes to our rescue in a tight corner, when there would be no time at all to think and calculate how we are to escape.

But in the moral order the influence of habit is all the more comforting. The fact that we are like in ordinary circumstances to act according as we are in the habit of acting gives us a moral sureness and a stability in well-doing that is our greatest source of security. If it were not for the influence of habit, the best of us might well dread the influence of a sudden temptation, the sur-

prise of a chance whim, the changeableness of an unguarded impulse. But the habits we have cultivated by many repetitions of the same action or class of actions hold us firm in certain ways of conduct, and keep our moral equilibrium against the thrusts of circumstances and the tugs of temptation.

Our resolutions are good and precious, therefore, not only for the immediate results that they bring in the way of accomplishment of the things that we have resolved on, but for the influence they have on our character in forming good habits, uprooting bad ones, and setting the trend of our will toward better and nobler things. Each good resolve is not only good in itself, but still more useful as the member of a series. Without the single resolves we can not have the cumulative effect of many resolutions taken at different times and with repeated earnestness and decision; and it is only by many such resolves, sincerely meant and often renewed, that we shall ever be able to change our character as we need to and implant the good qualities that we lack.

Still, for the greater efficacy of the resolves we make, it is well for us to consider certain things that greatly help us in the immediate keeping of our resolutions and increase their influence on our character. One of these things is that we make our resolves as definite and detailed as possible. It is not of much use to say: "I will be better." Such general and ineffective desires rather retard us, for they give us the pleasant delusion that we have taken a good resolve, without offering any standard by which we can test the sincerity of our intention to do better. No, the right way to make resolutions is to come down to particulars, to foresee occasions, plan out a definite course of action—even, if possible, appoint times and seasons, so that we can keep track of ourselves afterward and decide whether we have acted on our resolve when put to the test of actual difficulties and discouragements, or have weakly surrendered to circumstances. The more definite a resolution is and the more we foresee the difficulties which will hinder us from doing what we purpose, the more likelihood there is of our keeping it,

and the more salutary is its influence on our character.

Another precaution which will greatly help us in the seriousness and efficacy of our resolutions is to get very clearly and strongly before our mind the motives that have induced us to take the resolve, and that will therefore encourage and strengthen us in keeping it. Too often good resolutions are taken only under the influence of a transient feeling, whether of remorse and regret or of devotion and piety, and when the feeling vanishes—as go it will, however strong at the moment—our resolutions vanish also, not having been based on the lasting motives that continue to support the will, but upon the transient warmth and glow of the feelings. Those who take a resolve on no stronger foundation than a feeling of goodness or devotion deceive themselves into believing that they are really in earnest. Their resolve is built on sand. The shifting of the variable and inconstant feelings will undermine and overthrow it. Therefore let us ground our resolves on solid and lasting motives, which we may remember in dry and

arid seasons of discouragement and temptation. Let us make the resolves themselves so detailed and definite that there may be no doubt when the time comes just what we have purposed to do, and then stay them with such permanent and solid motives that they may outlast all changes of feeling and circumstance.

Finally, to succeed in keeping our resolutions, it is very well to make them for a definite time, recall them at fixed and regular intervals, and call ourselves to definite account as to whether we have done what we have resolved on. If you will write out your resolutions, as prudent people do the resolves they take at the end of a retreat, and then recall them by reading them over—let us say, every Sunday morning—keeping the list in your prayer-book for that purpose, you will be surer of doing as you resolve, because you will renew every week the strength of your resolve and will be able to keep track of your progress.

If we attend to these few and simple points for making good resolutions, we shall find that our resolves will become for us an

occasion of real spiritual growth, a landmark in the life of our souls. It is by resolving and partly succeeding, resolving again and trying again and again, that we go forward in the development of character, and climb the steep and narrow way that leads to holiness. Resolutions are not the comical and futile things that one would think from the shallow jests that pass current with the witlings. They are a holy and serious matter, an opportunity, not to be slighted nor lightly used, and persevered in they will lead us slowly but certainly to perfection.

SUFFERING

THE sum of human suffering has been immensely increased by this terrible war. In the last four years it is estimated that five million men have died violent and sometimes agonizing deaths on the field of battle, or pined away in anguish until merciful release came to them in the wards of hospitals. The wounded and those whose mental agony has been unrecorded as they lay in filthy trenches or heard the enemy's guns searching out their lives in the dismal dugouts are unnumbered. Some men have been wounded many times and sent to the hospital only to be called out again to face once more the agonies of war. But more than all this suffering of the combatants has been the anguish of mind and body inflicted on innocent women and children who are little prepared to meet the famine, anxiety, and grief that war has brought them. Not five millions, but five hundred millions have tasted in varying degrees of the bitter fruits of this awful

struggle. It is a time, then, that brings again to the mind, and in a more vivid way, the old question—"What is the use of pain? Why does God allow so much agony and suffering?"

The answer is, in brief, that suffering is a punishment for sin, and that had there never been sin in the world there would never have been any suffering. To original sin is due the coming of sorrow into the world, and the subsequent sins of mankind have immensely added to the sum of human misery. Even at the present time, if all sin were to cease, and if every human being were perfectly to obey the will of God, most of the sorrow of the world would be healed, for the pains of sickness and the other woes incidental to our fallen nature are not to be compared to the anguish that is brought on the earth by man's inhumanity to man. So that we have to thank ourselves for our sorrows. God gave mankind the priceless gift of freedom of will, and man used it to sin. The wages of sin are death and suffering. Here we have in brief compass the logical genesis of our woes.

Yet God has turned this pain and suffering which we have brought on ourselves by our sins, into a blessing. Pain, anguish, and sorrow, in themselves physical evils, have become the source of the greatest moral benefits. Since man chose to sin and to incur the punishment of pain, God shows His power and His mercy by making this very pain into the instrument of our greatest good. Those who think deeply and see truly must realize the profit that pain brings to the soul. To begin with, the endurance of pain and suffering is the greatest proof that we can give of our sincerity and of our love. All true and pure love is made perfect in suffering and sacrifice. The love of country, the love of one's neighbor, the chaste love of husband and wife, the love which those consecrated to God in religion have for God and for humanity, the love of parent for child and of child for parent, receive their greatest consecration and reach their supreme height of pure intensity when proved and witnessed by the endurance of pain and of sorrow. The love which can not stand this test is not worthy the name, and, on the

other hand, any pure and noble love is desirous of proving itself by some sacrifice and some effort for the one who is loved. Thus it is that the whole of history, both human and divine, is made beautiful by heroism which springs from the endurance of pain. The dauntless fortitude of patriotism, the loving self-sacrifice of mothers, the fortitude of priests, the courage of confessors, the purity of virgins, the heroism of saints, are all made possible because there is pain to be endured, sacrifices to be made, and sorrow to be voluntarily undergone for the sake of love and principle.

Viewed in this light, sorrow and suffering are inestimable benefits, because they give occasion for the exercise of heroic love. With all the weakness of our fallen nature, our will still retains its power voluntarily to embrace pain and sacrifice in testimony of its love.

Moreover, suffering has another benefit for us in that it takes our hearts away from the worthless but alluring goods of time, and sends our thoughts towards eternity. When all is comfortable and easy the soul naturally

grows immersed in sensible and present pleasures, and forgets the things of eternity. There are few who are great enough of soul to bear entire prosperity without becoming selfish and worldly. It needs the goad of pain and the sting of adversity to start the soul out from its earthly nest and send it winging towards heaven. The cauterizing fire of grief and of physical pain is the most powerful cure for worldliness and sensuality. Many a soul has been ruined by too much pleasure and prosperity, and many a heart has been cured of its worldliness and brought back to God by the remedy of pain.

Again, it is much easier to serve God and merit heaven when we are in some suffering than when all goes well with us. There is nothing to be done with suffering except to offer it to God. It has a sort of consecration which fits it for nothing but either the sullen endurance of the brute or the resigned oblation of the Christian. The good things of life we can use quite comfortably for ourselves, without thinking of God. We have a present need and liking for them, and therefore it requires a greater effort for our

soul to detach itself from these good things to offer them up to God. But for pain and suffering we have no use except to offer them up to God. Hence when pain is on us the religious soul turns naturally to God, purifies the intentions of its heart, finds it easy to think of its Father in Heaven, because the earth is made distasteful, painful, and weary by this suffering. If you look back on your life and consider what were the most meritorious days you spent, you will find that they were not the most pleasant days. The delightful hours when you were in health and high spirits, when the world was sunny and it seemed good to live, were perhaps the very days in which you got farther from God. His gifts fall so gently and ceaselessly from His bountiful hand that we grow to forget the Giver and take for granted all God does for us. The times in which you prayed best, thought most of Heaven, raised your heart oftenest to God, were the times of pain and sorrow. When grief threw its dark shadow on you, and when pain drilled through the hard crust of forgetfulness and complacency, and pierced

your heart, then you turned to God as a hurt child turns to its mother, and spoke to Him out of the very depth of your need. It is true that there are some whom grief hardens and embitters; but this is their fault, and not the fault of God's merciful providence. In His designs all things are intended for His glory and the good of souls, and just as we can misuse any good gift, so also we can misuse the gift of suffering and of pain.

Another sweet efficacy of suffering is to make our hearts more tender and considerate of the pain of others. One of the loveliest attributes of the human heart is its capacity for sympathy and compassion; yet, if we have not felt pain ourselves, or if a long period of unbroken happiness has dulled our recollection of what it means to suffer keenly, we are very apt to grow callous to the suffering of others. The touch of pain makes our heart sensitive to others' pain. It opens the springs of compassion, and we become skilled in healing others, because we have known what it is to be wounded ourselves. Who are the most compassionate

and tender? Those who have themselves the greatest capacity for suffering, those who have suffered the most themselves. Again, if there were no suffering we should not have the blessed opportunity of practising Christian compassion. Consider what glorious charities have sprung up like lilies from the dark soil of human suffering. All the great works of mercy, the hospitals, the asylums, the orphanages, the homes for the poor, all organized Christian charities, are meant in one way or another to alleviate human suffering. And the vast sum of silent, unorganized charities! Who can calculate their extent or weigh their merit in the sight of God! What a loss to the human race if all the splendid heroism that has risen from suffering, all the tender mercy to which suffering has given occasion, were taken from the world!

But the supreme lesson of the worth of suffering and pain is given us by the Son of God himself. Behold that amazing example before which all other instances pale and fade away! The Infinite and Eternal, most happy in Himself, saw in His wisdom the

value and efficacy of suffering, and came to earth and assumed human nature in order that He who surpassed all beings in perfection might also surpass them all in suffering. Before this mystery the intellect of man staggers and goes blind. When God chose that the eternal Son of God should become man for the salvation of sinners, He decreed that after a life of sorrow and anguish this God-Man should die in the supreme agony and humiliation of the crucifixion. The sight of the crucifix stops in our mouths the words of complaint for our own suffering. In the light that is shed from the crucifix the whole face of the world is changed. The Son of Man hanging on the cross in His three hours' agony shows us as nothing else can the preciousness of suffering, by which He gives the supreme proof of love, conquers for all ages the powers of evil, redeems all souls, glorifies His eternal Father. His voluntary passion and death have forever weighed down the balance on the side of goodness and of justice, so that all the sins of men and angels can never pull it back to the side of evil.

Applying these principles to the dreadful devastations of the war and the agony that it has caused in the world, we should see the merciful designs of Providence shining behind these clouds of sorrow. For all this physical agony, pain, and horror, great good has come upon mankind. The pure zeal of patriotism, the innumerable deeds of heroic self-sacrifice, the angelic ministrations of mercy on the battlefield and in the hospitals, the charity towards the afflicted and homeless, these things have been made possible by the war. It has caused besides a great searching of hearts. Men and women who were sunk deeply in their own selfish interests and affairs have started up as from a stupor and performed deeds of charity and heroism of which before they would never have believed themselves capable. Many and many, their eyes washed clear by tears, have seen the worthlessness of earth, and have turned their longing looks to heaven. The materialistic stupor that was coming over the civilization of Europe has been violently dispelled. The mists of sensual indulgence have been shaken, souls have been stirred to their

depths, and hearts have been purified by pain. It is for these things, no less than as a punishment for our transgressions, that the merciful Father of men allows these catastrophes to come upon the world. Fixing our eyes on the crucifix, considering that the end of life is not to make merry, but to win heaven, and that all things are precious as they help us to serve God and save our souls, we may keep our hearts calm and confident even in this time of widespread desolation. For in God's good time, to those who love Him, all things, even pain and suffering, work together unto good!

THE POOR SOULS

“**N**OTHING defiled can enter heaven,” hence even a venial sin unatoned for is a bar from that abode of the All-holy and All-pure. On the other hand, many, indeed most of those who die in God’s grace, die, alas, without having made due satisfaction for the venial sins of which we commit so many in this wretched life, or for the temporal punishment due to mortal sins after their guilt has been remitted. Hence there is need of a middle place or state of atonement which we call “purgatory,” or the place of purging, of cleansing souls to make them fit for heaven. This, in brief, is the reason for purgatory. Notice that purgatory was not included in the original plan of creation, save contingently on man’s sin. We force, so to speak, this sad prison-house upon creation. We make it necessary by our venial sins and neglect of penance.

It is not difficult to believe the teaching of the Church in regard to purgatory, neither is it hard to persuade men of the need and

charity of praying for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins. The Great War has immensely increased the number of those who believe and practise prayer for the dead, because misfortune has a great logic of its own to pierce through false systems of thought and silly misconceptions, and to show things as they are. Before the war you would have found many glib talkers who would have argued down any assertion that it helps the dead to pray for them. Now, these same people, pierced to the heart by the sudden death of some one they love, are on their knees praying for his soul. And the mere fact that one prays for the dead necessarily involves the admission of a middle place or state—purgatory. For if the dead are in heaven already there is no need to pray for them; if they are in hell there is no use. The only departed souls whom we can help by our prayers are the souls in purgatory.

November is the month specially devoted to thought and prayer for the poor souls in purgatory; but, indeed, the memory of them and the pity of them should pursue us

throughout the entire year. If we had a more lively faith, if we realized the meaning of this teaching of our holy Church of the existence of purgatory, we should be consumed with sorrow, sympathy, and eagerness to help the poor suffering souls. That is our chief difficulty, the great cause of our apathy and neglect of them—we do not realize. And suffering which we do not realize excites neither our pity nor our active help. Yet these countless souls are suffering, and they cry out to us for assistance.

Some years ago a dreadful accident, a cave-in, occurred in an American mine. Several of the wretched miners were buried under tons of earth. All of them were killed but one. He escaped death, but he was pinned down under a heavy beam, and there was enough air left in the shaft to keep him alive for many days. By pounding on a beam he gave signs that he was still alive; and on the instant, through the notices published in the papers, hundreds and thousands of men and women all over the country began to take an intimate and personal interest in the fate of the buried man. Every-

thing possible was done to save him. With the greatest care a small iron pipe was driven down through the earth, until by signals those above knew it had reached the buried man. ' Through the pipe food was let down, encouraging messages sent; and meanwhile men were digging night and day to get through the mass of earth and rescue the man at the bottom of it. Finally, in the midst of general rejoicing, in which people far away joined as heartily as the bystanders, the man was reached, extricated from his agonizing situation, and restored to the light and air. Only a few strong diggers had been able actually to help him out; but, if it had been practicable and necessary, one could have got the help of hundreds of thousands. They realized his terrible predicament and wanted to rescue him from it. So, if we can bring home to ourselves the dreadful predicament of the Poor Souls, we shall be most ready and eager to help them.

Let us think then, first of all, of the vast number of souls who are in purgatory. Every day, in the ordinary course of nature, one hundred thousand human beings die.

Nearly a million a week; in a month, as many, almost, as the whole population of New York City; in a year, something like thirty-five millions! Now consider how many of these, excepting only the innocent children, who have been baptized and never committed any sin, are fit for instant entrance into heaven and escape purgatory altogether. So, most souls must pass some time in the cleansing gulf of purgatory. And at this present time, when sudden death is seeking out so many in the trenches and in hospitals, the number of souls in purgatory is even greater. God alone knows what countless multitudes are there now, lifting pitiful voices from that place of suffering, pleading with us to help them more quickly to heaven!

God, in His wisdom, has chosen to tell us very little about purgatory. How long a soul must abide there we do not know. Some of the saints have told of visions which would indicate that some wretched souls must wait many years, perhaps until judgment day, before the traces of their offenses are burned and purged away. And in this

self-indulgent, pleasure-loving, worldly age, when men and women do so little penance of any kind and shrink from self-inflicted suffering for their sins, it seems clear that huge arrears remain to be paid in purgatory.

Concerning the precise nature of the physical punishment of purgatory we likewise know little that is certain. But, again, the sayings of the saints fill us with the uneasiest apprehensions. Some have thought and said that there is here the same excruciating torment of fire as there is in hell itself, with the sole difference that in purgatory the sufferings have an ending. Yet, whatever the physical agonies of the Poor Souls may be, they are to be feared for ourselves and pitied in others, because all God's works are thorough and effective, and He punishes as He rewards, with exactness and fully.

Yet the greatest pain of purgatory, like the greatest agony of hell, is not physical pain. It is the sense of loss of, and of longing for, the unspeakably desired vision and enjoyment of God! Our soul has an immense craving for happiness; it has unbounded energy and unspeakably great de-

sires. While we are in this world these energies expend themselves to a great degree on sensible objects; and the craving for happiness, the mainspring of all human activities, drives us on from one object to another in a restless quest for satisfaction. But at the moment of death the soul leaves all material things, even the very body, behind, and plunges into an immense solitude in which there is nothing to make us happy but God alone. Then happens a thing wonderful to us, but most natural in itself. The soul, created for God, blindly craving for God all during life, now awakens to a realization that all its desire, all its need, its yearning, its longing, is for God, and it spends all the immense energy of its being in one tremendous and unspeakable striving and craving to possess Him! It is, to use a necessarily feeble comparison, as when a child who has been lost in darkness and danger all the night suddenly sees the face of its father, and rushes with all its strength to meet him. But the soul that has died in sin can not possess God—its uncleanness is an insuperable obstacle. In the case of

those souls who resist God to the last and die in mortal sin this awful insatiable longing is the chiefest torture of eternity. But in souls who have died in God's friendship, yet still stained with sin, this tremendous yearning for God is the chief torture of purgatory. Such a soul leaps eagerly to the cleansing waters of purgatory, bearing with willingness whatever sorrow, so that it only pays its price for the sight of God. Its yearnings are thus beautifully expressed by Cardinal Newman in his poem, "The Dream of Gerontius":

"Take me away and in the lowest deep
There let me be,
And there in hope the lone night-watches keep,
Told out for me.
There, motionless and happy in my pain,
Lone, not forlorn—
There will I sing my sad perpetual strain
Until the morn.
There will I sing, and soothe my stricken breast,
Which ne'er can cease
To throb, and pine, and languish, 'till possessed
Of its Sole Peace.
There will I sing my absent Lord and Love—
Take me away,
That sooner I may rise, and go above,
And see Him in the truth of everlasting day."

Imagine, then, if you can, the agony and yearning of that place of sorrow. Innum-

erable souls, some of them, perhaps, dear to us in this life, lie stretched on a bed of agony and yearning which they have made for themselves by their sins. They have not, as we have in our sufferings, the distractions of earth, the consolation of friends. They lie in lonely, wakeful darkness, racked with desire and regret. We might shorten their time of suffering by little acts of penance, indulgenced prayers, easy aspirations. But we forget—and they suffer! They yearn for God with an agonized, undistracted, constant, exquisite longing; and the memory of their sins that hold them back from Him is as gall and wormwood to them. These sins are keeping them from God, and they have lost forever that degree of glory which they might have merited by avoiding venial sins and practising virtue. This remorse and regret, the painful hunger for the vision of God, the consequences and realization of the worthlessness of sin, the folly of it, and the loss of it, keep them in agony in their bed of sorrows. Those who have spent long wakeful nights, a prey, perhaps, to sorrow or to regret, can feebly realize what this long vigil

of punishment must be, when the soul, whose whole being yearns for God, pines alone in the darkness, wakeful and suffering, full of regret and sorrow at the offenses for which it suffers, and eagerly desirous for its time of suffering to pass. Then think to yourself that by the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, an act of charity, of prayer, by gaining indulgences, by offering up Holy Communion, the giving of alms, by any of the spiritual or corporal works of mercy, you can so readily make atonement for some of the remaining punishment due to these Holy Souls and bring about their speedier entrance into heaven! How can we be indifferent to these thoughts? How can we fail to make and keep an effective resolution to help the Holy Souls, not only during their month of November, but throughout the entire year?

THE FEAST OF GENEROUS LOVE

IT is too bad that the fine old custom of making Christmas gifts has fallen into such a decay. Not of course that many gifts are not made at Christmas time—indeed, one has only to look at the show windows to be convinced of the contrary—but that Christmas giving has fallen to such a low level, a material shoving about of more or less bulky packages, a scramble to give “something” to every one who, we think, will expect it, or who, we suppose, intends giving “something” to us. The gaudy show window laden with all sorts of extravagant and more or less useless “holiday goods”—not at all holy and sometimes very doubtfully good—is a fit symbol of the modern Christmas gift. The fat-paunched oaf, with red nose and an overfed smile, a bag full of falling goodies and a stereotyped expression of cheer is the fit presiding genius for such a place. How out of place the Crib and the Christ-Child would seem in the midst of these gew-gaws! His fit setting would be a window

full of quiet, tender little remembrances to one's friends and of bountiful baskets for the poor.

And the pity is the greater because, rightly understood and practised, the custom of Christmas giving has in it the very soul of the feast. For Christmas is the feast of the love of God for man and of man for God, and on either part that love, like all true love, is most fitly expressed by gifts. Love, as St. Ignatius has it so briefly and truly, is shown in actions rather than in words, and the action most natural to true and unselfish love is the giving of gifts. In proportion as our love is more true, unselfish, and sincere, so does the impulse and the desire grow to communicate and share all we have with the one whom we love. God Himself, whose infinite perfection is so far removed from our littleness, owns and acts upon this universal law of love. Or, rather, to speak more correctly, the generosity of true love, like all other created perfections, has its exemplar and source in the Infinite Generosity who is God.

We take all that God has given us so

much for granted that it needs some careful thought to bring home to us the amazing generosity of His adorable love. With a profusion and a liberality whose very vastness stuns our powers of apprehension, He is forever multiplying upon us His inconceivable gifts. Science is just beginning to explore the fringes of creation, and discovers day by day new manifestations of the ingenuity (it is a poor word, but all our words are poor to speak of God) with which God plans this universe, though it is a fallen world and only meant as a place of exile until He calls us home. The heavens at night blazing with uncounted stars, each one of which is the sun of another system, appall us with the thought of the vastness of preparation with which His omnipotence has prepared a dwelling place for us. And within each atom of that unthinkable, vast cloud of worlds our finest instruments of precision can find another universe in little, as perfectly designed, as utterly sustained, as the great systems of stars. Consider reverently the bewildering beauty and wonder of the world, of inanimate and of living things,

and you may catch a glimpse of the immense and provident generosity of God's love.

We ourselves, body and soul, are another of the gifts by which God shows us His love. As you stand you are a living monument to His generosity. Your body is the most wonderful of all His material creation. Your soul is a marvel whose beauty and splendor will be one of the breathless delights of your eternity. The preciousness of these gifts we can faintly conceive, but there are other gifts of God that go altogether beyond the scope of our comprehension. He gives us a sublime and heavenly quality into our soul called Sanctifying Grace, which makes us by its presence sons of God and fit for heaven, sharers in the justice of Christ and co-heirs with Him of His Father's Kingdom. He has prepared, with a special view to our profit and salvation, the immense organization of His Church, its priests, who may be found everywhere in the world, its incessant offering of innumerable Masses, its ever ready sacraments, which meet us at the cradle and never leave off their ministry of

grace until our anointed body is ready for the blessed tomb.

There is a profusion, an immensity, a repetition about God's generosity in spiritual things that irresistibly reminds us of the profusion of natural blessings. His graces are as wonderful, as thick and as countless as the stars. And just as He holds us in the hollow of His hand, watches us as no mother ever watched over her ailing babe, and supports us every instant by His power lest we should fall back into that nothingness from which we came, so in our feeble strivings for heaven it is His grace, the touch of His finger, the breathings of His Holy Spirit, that gives us the marvelous power to merit heaven and make our slightest actions done in His service profitable to us, beyond all comprehension, for an increase of glory in the world to come. We are overpowered with goodness, snowed upon with blessings, bewildered and struck dumb by the multiplied gifts of God.

And all these gifts are summed up, bodied forth sealed and signed and delivered to us in the supreme Gift which we commemorate

in the feast of Christmas. For in the manger of Bethlehem we see God Himself, whose generosity was dissatisfied with all His other gifts, come in our own human nature, surrendered to us, irrevocably ours for all eternity, flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, our blood Brother as long as God is God.

Creation is marvelous, but here we are given the Creator. Grace is an unspeakable gift, but here is the Author and Finisher of Grace. Heaven is glorious beyond all conceiving, but here is the Sun and Light of heaven. And beside the Child stands Mary, His mother, our most faithful intercessor, the mirror of His goodness, linking this Son of God with our human nature, God's mother and our mother! Well did the poet Crashaw, carried away by the contemplation of this Christmas scene, cry out:

Welcome all wonders in one sight!

Eternity shut in a span!

Summer in winter, day in night!

Heaven on earth, and God in man!

Great Little One, whose all-embracing birth

Lifts earth to Heaven; lowers Heaven to earth!

And the lovely Eucharistic hymn of St. Thomas sings most sweetly:

*Se nascens dedit socium,
Convalescens in edulium,
Se moriens in pretium,
Se regnans dat in premium.*

At birth He gave Him for our company;
At the Last Supper, our soul's food to be;
Upon the Cross, our saving ransom He;
In Heaven, our prize for all eternity.

From the infinite generosity of God, we may feebly conjecture the infinite love He has for us. And in consequence of this universal law of true love our love for God must be measured by our generosity toward Him. Can we be generous toward God? Not, of course, in the sense that we can give Him benefits or do Him favors. In Himself He is all-sufficient, and whatever we offer Him is already His own. It would seem that we are at a dreadful disadvantage when we strive to make a return for the generosity of His love. But He has provided so that we may be generous even to Him the Most High. Did you ever reflect how very little, relatively, God demands of us under pain of sin? The absolute requirements that God makes on our service are not so very great, after all. He asks of us little so as to give scope to our generosity to do still

more than **He** requires. The Lord loveth a cheerful giver. He delights to offer us opportunities of showing generosity in His service.

It was this thought that stirred the hearts of the saints to greater and greater efforts to give their whole hearts to God. Like true lovers as they were, they went to lengths that frighten and surprise our cold and selfish hearts, to give God proofs of their generosity and love. And we should follow them as closely as we can, urging ourselves to generous giving to the Christ-Child at Christmas time, offering Him now the service we have long been delaying, the sacrifices we have been fearing, the fervor we have been resolving without courage to put our purpose to effect. It is the feast of God's loving generosity to us; let us make it a feast also of our loving generosity toward God!

But God has made still further provision to allow us to be generous to Him. He needs nothing, we can give Him nothing; He is above our bounty and our care. But with divine wisdom He has provided against this lack of occasion for ministrations

toward Him. He points to all those whom He takes for His brothers and sisters in this Christmas mystery, and declares to us that whatever we do to the least of these His brethren we do it unto Him. Here is the inspiration of Christian charity of which likewise Christmas is the feast. Here is an endless opportunity offered us of being generous to God Himself in the persons of those around us. It is a fearful as well as a wonderful thought, that our least deed toward others is done also to God. It shakes the heart with apprehension as well as with longing. Those about us, even the poorest and most simple, take on an awe-inspiring dignity in the light of Christmas morning, for the least of them is brother to the Babe of Bethlehem, and what we do to any of His brethren is done to Christ. It is of this spirit of Christmas, generosity toward others for the sake of Christ, that Christmas gifts are meant to be the reminder and the expression. If we would give in the Christmas spirit we should give for the love of Christ.

Put down the page and think for a while

what your gifts should be next Christmas. What would Christ have you do for others for **H**is love and in **H**is name? The answer will be the sum of your opportunities for helping, cheering, benefiting the many about you.

ESPECIALLY YOURS

PERHAPS you may feel just a bit discouraged, in reading or hearing of the needs of the Church and her children, to think what a wee little part you can possibly play in helping to meet them. You are already hard put to it, perhaps, in meeting the necessary grind of living, and feel constrained to cry out sometimes with the fair, wise Portia, "My little body is aweary of this great world." Your means, too, for all your economies and sparings, are hopelessly inadequate to anything worth while, as it seems to you, and you settle down into a sort of desperate resignation perhaps to do nothing at all for the Church just now, under present conditions, thinking meanwhile how very much you would do if you were only as rich as Jane, as leisured as Tom, or as talented as Mary or Jim.

Perhaps you would. Perhaps you are much better than they, who with greater opportunities do as little as you for their neighbor or for the Church. But the prob-

abilities are that even with much greater means you would do little more than you are doing now, unless you could practically make your own the truth that there is some work for the Church which God means to be especially yours, and which **He** has therefore given you ample talent and means to do, and to do better perhaps than any one else in the world.

For God, who sees truly, and sees things as they are, does not regard the world as a hodgepodge of work to be done and no one to do it, and of opportunities offered with no one who can take them. **He** has ordered the world by **His** providence so that men can be helped by men, and so that the needs of others may be our own sublime opportunity. What **He** wishes us to do **He** brings to our notice and puts in our power, giving us at the same time the sweet and moving influence and aid of **His** grace to enable us to do it for **His** love. At your door **He** puts your opportunity. All we need do is find out the particular work for which God has fitted us, and we shall surprise ourselves, and others as well, by the amount we can accomplish.

How can you find the work? It lies around you. Make a survey of the things that are in your power. You will find, in the first place, the opportunity for many subtle and personal kindnesses that are either thrust on your attention, or come to you as a suggestion from without, or are brought to your mind by divine grace, which is the voice of God whispering to your soul. Ah, these are precious opportunities! Because the kindness which it comes your way to do seems a trifling thing, do not for that despise it or let it pass. Slight, passing kindnesses sometimes cheer despairing souls or hearten timid ones, nerve the despondent in critical decisions, and give the disillusioned and the bitter of heart a new confidence in man and a new hope of life. Can they be trifles if they have such possibilities? And such opportunities are the commonest things in life. They press upon us whenever we are in others' company. Our days are dotted with them, and each one is an offer from God.

Unfortunately for some of us, we are not equally blessed with what one may call the natural talent for kindness. One would like

to believe that all good people are kind at heart—and that is probably the truth. But it is also true that some of us have a hard time of it, letting that kindness come up from our hearts into our words and looks and actions where it can cheer and delight our neighbors. But if some effort is needed to take advantage of these everyday opportunities for being kind, this effort will increase our merit. The most unkind by nature should make the greater study to be kind.

Besides these ordinary and everyday opportunities of helping others by a kind word in season or a bit of tactful warning or advice, there is the vast field of individual charity. In your neighborhood there is something for you to do which is especially yours, and which no one else can accomplish for you. God has divided up the world among us and given each one a little sphere of action and influence. In a small circle you are supreme, and no one can do so well the work that is yours. It may be helping some poor and sensitive person of whose necessity no one knows so well as yourself, and whom no one else can so tactfully re-

lieve. Or it may be a matter of persuading some Catholic who is careless about such things to help on Catholic literature or to read Catholic periodicals. You live next door, or you meet him every day, and so it is a most easy and obvious thing for you to speak about some good Catholic book or lend your copy of a Catholic magazine, mentioning the article in which you think he will be especially interested.

Or it may be that you have a little time on a Saturday afternoon and the knack of teaching catechism, and that the youngsters in your neighborhood or in some poor parish that you know are in need of catechetical instruction. No one can get them together so readily as you, and so the work of gathering the little ones and teaching them their faith is obviously especially yours. Or else there is that poor boy or girl who is in bad surroundings, and who has somehow been brought to your notice. Why do you suppose it happened so? Was it not God's providence that has brought this occasion for charitable effort to your attention, and is keeping it especially yours? The little op-

portunities that come our way are such precious things, and they are the results of such long prevision and careful planning in the councils of God! He only knows in what remote ages He set in motion the train of circumstances which led up to this precious little opportunity which He now puts before you as especially yours.

Then there is the help that you are enabled to give to Catholic societies. In your parish and in your city there are a number of these organizations for the glory of God and for the good of souls, chief among them perhaps the Sodality, which claims your loyalty and your service from the long benefits you have received from it from the time you were a little child. These societies are to you an opportunity. They offer to you the occasion of gaining that blessing which Our Lord expressed in the words, "Where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." You say that you can not belong to them all, and that is quite true. Each is an opportunity, but you can not take advantage of all the opportunities. Still, there are some of

these societies that are especially yours, that God means to be the occasion for you to practise piety and zeal. Look about you and choose. The variety of such societies allows for the difference in tastes and talents. You can not belong to all, but there are some in which you should feel particularly interested. Join them and consider them in the providence of God as especially yours. Not that you are to cultivate a ridiculous partisanship for them, but that, while serving one or two societies, you will love all, having special esteem for the work of the ones in which you are not immediately occupied.

Choose your work and, because you can do only a little, be all the more solicitous not to let that little remain undone; because, little though it may be, it is especially yours. We have, all of us, a certain amount of leisure, a certain proportion of energy, interest, and money that we can somehow spare from our own necessities. If you doubt this, consider the very poor, who are hard put to it to keep body and soul together. They are the most charitable people in the world, because they will relieve the necessity of a

neighbor out of their own great want. The sublime instance of heroic charity given us by Our Lord in the Scriptures was not taken from among the wealthy Sadducees nor from the ostentatious Pharisees. It was the poor widow who dropped a tiny coin into the treasury of the temple; but that tiny coin was her whole living. How lovingly was she regarded and spoken of by the tender heart of Christ! So with you also: the less able you are to spare the time and money for works of charity, the more blessing will be yours for the little you can do. **Do not neglect to give your precious mite.**

THE THIRD VOCATION

NOT long ago a devout Catholic girl asked us to write something for the guidance of those who, as she expressed it, were called to the third vocation, that is, to a life of virginity and of service in the world. There are, she explained, so many Catholic girls nowadays who have no mind or no opportunity to enter the religious life, and who, on the other hand, wish to strive bravely for perfection and to do something more than ordinary for God and their neighbor. Many of the spiritual books that they read speak as though the vows of religion and matrimony exhausted the possible vocations for women, and so they are puzzled sometimes to know whether their own state is one that enters into the plans of Providence, or whether the only state they can aspire to is that which the world in the spirit of ridicule has called the life of an "old maid."

To begin with, it is quite clear that women are no more bound than men to enter the

state either of religion or of matrimony. Possibly the reason that the old-time writers sometimes seemed to teach a contrary doctrine was that in the circumstances of their time there appeared to be little place for women save in the cloister or the home. Used as we have now grown to the industrial independence of women and to their presence in almost every business and profession, we have come to forget that in no very remote day it was impossible for most women who had no estates of their own to make a living for themselves, except as domestic servants, or as dependents and helpers in some other woman's home. In common prudence, therefore, it was wise to advise young women either to seek a happy and Christian marriage or to follow the calling of a religious life. The exceptional women who had a vocation other than these might be expected to find out for themselves and without the aid of books what sort of life God meant them to pursue.

But the typewriter and the telephone and the thousand avenues that modern methods of business have offered to women who wish

to make their own living have quite altered the situation. The Catholic girl, so far as making her own living is concerned, is coming more and more to a level of equality with her brothers; and late developments, especially the changes of the war, bid fair to hasten, for better or for worse, this equality of the sexes as regards their industrial status. Granted that a girl can maintain herself in a holy and devoted life in the world, there remains no reason to bid her choose between the cloister and the sacrament, save the reason (and it is sometimes a very strong one) that only in the one or the other will she be safe in the way of salvation.

For one must own that both for men and for women a state of virginity in the world is an unusual and exceptional way of life. The great majority of mankind quickly settle the problem of vocation and declare for matrimony. A small band of chosen souls make the great renunciation and follow Christ most closely in poverty, chastity, and obedience. To live without the consolation of the cloister or the shelter of home is, one must confess, out of the ordinary and, in a

sense, a more perilous way of living. Perilous, not in the sense that one's salvation is hard, but in that happiness is more difficult of achievement, and lasting contentedness less usual in this than in the states of marriage and of religion. We are by nature so gregarious that some sort of fixed society, either of nature, as in the family, or by virtue of the vows, as in a religious community, seems necessary for permanent content. Then there is the apprehension and the severe reality of old age, when the worn body and enfeebled mind most crave and need the shelter and comfort of home. The Religious is assured of these in the bosom of her community. The mother looks for the cherishing care of her children when she shall have grown old. But those who elect the state of virginity in the world, unless they make some special and wise provision for the coming of old age, must fear loneliness and decrepitude far more keenly than those who have chosen the vows of religion or of marriage.

Keeping these remarks in mind, it is still clear that the state of virginity in the world

may be said to be for some a vocation in itself and one approved under certain circumstances by the Church. For she permits and even encourages those who live in the world and who give promise of fidelity to that high obligation, to take the vow of chastity, and to bind themselves in this way to a life of virginity. More still, she teaches that virginity (and this applies even to the state of virginity in the world) is in itself a more perfect state than marriage, and it follows from her teaching that those who take the vow of virginity, even in the world, embrace a state more perfect in itself than is the state of marriage. But, for all that, she does, like a prudent mother, gently encourage and direct those who aspire to serve God in a more perfect manner to choose the holy life of religion, and leaves it free for those whom special circumstances impel, to find for themselves the state of virginity in the world.

But there are several circumstances in modern life that bid fair to increase the number of those who choose this latter way of life. It is increasingly possible, for one

thing, that a girl should support the dependents of her family through her own labors, and the constant widening out of woman's opportunity in the field of business and the professions will make many a Catholic girl, who would otherwise have left the world and have joyfully consecrated herself to God in religion, stay to be the support of a widowed mother or the help of an aged father or of a dependent relative. To these God gives exceptional graces to live a saintly life in the world, and admirably and gloriously do many of them respond to His graces. Others, again, are kept from the religious life by still other obstacles, by infirm health, it may be, or by the circumstances of their bringing-up, which opened up to them too late or not at all the opportunity of becoming a Religious. Others still have not felt any attraction for the religious life, but are strongly inclined to piety in the world, and they consecrate themselves to God by the vow of virginity, remaining in the place for which they feel themselves most fitted, and where they conceive they can serve Him most effectively.

Honor to them, those devoted women who carry the lily of a consecrated purity, white and fair, through the dark airs of the world. Theirs is a strange lot and sometimes a hard one, but their life flowers out in manifold service, sometimes of such a kind as none but they can give. Their zeal and self-sacrifice are the mainstay of how many Catholic charities! Their secret good works make fragrant many lonely places where none but they can come. The silent influence of their good example sweetens the quiet circle where they move, and their absence would be sadly felt should they withdraw their unselfish ministrations. For them the phrase "old maid" would merit a new meaning full of praise and congratulation. For they grow old in a consecrated maidenhood, old handmaids of the Lord who have wearied their old hands in well-doing, dimmed their eyes in reading and in soothing the trials and sorrows of others, and worn out their old limbs in ministering to Christ's children and to His poor. When they fall asleep in the Lord at last, having known no lasting home sometimes on earth, He will

receive them into the choir of virgins to be close to Him for eternity.

Let us, then, give due esteem to the state of virginity in the world, not lessening its glories, while at the same time we avoid setting it up as equal to the most admirable state of the religious life of the three vows. It is an exceptional state, and therefore not to be urged upon, or recommended to, women in general. It needs special graces of its own, and is for the most part the outcome of special circumstances. Those who follow this way of life may be said to need extra graces and, while they belong to the laity, to require something of the direction, the safeguards, and the helps in the spiritual life that are enjoyed by Religious.

In this connection the Sodality, properly understood and well conducted, offers itself as a powerful means of safety and sanctification to these virgins living in the world. In the rules of the Sodality they will find a comprehensive and well-planned rule of life which will guide them surely and safely to a close imitation of their Blessed Mother and protectress. In the holy practices recom-

mended to Sodalists they will profit by the wise experience of more than three centuries, teaching them the means best suited to cultivate holiness in the world. Among the numbers of their fellow Sodalists, both on earth and in heaven, they will find many companions like themselves, leading a similarly consecrated life, inspired by the same ideals, and banded together in friendliness and helpfulness under the same protection of their most loving Mother.

It is little short of a calamity, then, that in too many places these very Catholic women, who most are fitted to be good Sodalists and are most in need of the association of a good Sodality, are deprived of the opportunity of entering one, either because none exists or because the organization called by that name is only a travesty of what a Sodality by its rules should be. It is a huge misfortune, too, that so many of these same women have been repelled and disappointed by the Sodalities to which they have belonged, and have conceived an aversion to the very society which is above others suited to lead them to sanctity. Several times

since the beginning of our work of promoting the true Sodality spirit the writer has been approached by zealous Catholic women who were desirous of making the Sodality the bond of union for gathering under the banner of Mary these devout women living in the world. Indeed some such projects are now being carried into execution. Without any new rules or organization, with only the spirit of the Sodality to guide, its charity to unite them, and its rules to direct them, they are planning to live together and to devote what time they can spare from their efforts for a livelihood to the carrying out of the work that offers itself for the neighbor and for the Church.

THE SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE

THERE is often a world of significance in the mere history of a word. Thus, the word "sacrifice," in its original meaning, signifies merely "to make holy" (*sacrum facere*). But since the victims which were "made holy" by being offered to God were usually consumed in token of His supreme dominion and of man's entire dependence upon Him, the word "sacrifice" has come to have another meaning—the giving up of some dear and cherished object, the offering of something we prize.

In the Old Law, as in the New, sacrifice is the supreme act of religion and service of God. By degrees the word which originally meant an act of worship by the sanctifying of an offering to God has come to mean the giving up of something dear to us.

The significance of this history of a word is to be found in the thought that God's service and love do indeed necessarily include some idea of sacrifice. Whoever will devote himself to the service of the Most

High and give God special honor must of necessity cultivate the spirit of sacrifice and be willing to give up things that are dear to him. Indeed, the willingness to make sacrifices is the test of our sincerity, and if we do not love God's honor and service enough to make sacrifices to please Him, our love is a mere matter of sentiment and a passing fancy.

Again, as our poor human nature is made, the service of God always requires that we do some violence to our inclinations, and so give up something that is dear to us; and this is another reason why God's service is always bound up with the idea of sacrifice. To follow the mere way of the commandments involves the giving up of many things to which our fallen nature inclines, but to serve God in a more excellent way means to give up a host of innocent pleasures and pursuits which, though good in themselves, are, in one way or another, inconsistent with the things we wish to do for God.

Thus, for instance, the supreme personal sacrifice which the Christian can make in this world is the three-fold offering of the religious vows of poverty, chastity and obedi-

ence. This makes one's whole life an act of worship, a whole burnt offering to God. It is the supreme sacrifice, to be lived out in every day and hour of a long life. And such an offering cuts off the maker of it from all the things which would otherwise have filled his days. His individual life is merged into the life of the community to which he belongs, and he departs from home and friends to live among others who have like himself made a sacrifice of their homes and friends, of their daily lives and all their private interests and pursuits, to God. Moreover, the daily life of a good religious is the living out in its details of a tremendous sacrifice. By poverty, he renounces that universal craving to have goods and possessions of his own, a competence which he can feel master of and give or keep as he chooses. By chastity, he renounces the whole range of homely pleasures which gather about one's own fireside, the joy of those children who might have been his, the company of a wife, the housing of friends—all in a word that goes with the establishing of one's own family and the building of a home. By obedi-

ence, he makes sacrifice of the dearest thing of all, his own sovereign will and the ingrained love which every man has of ruling his own fortunes and choosing his own occupation—in a word, of being his own master and deciding his own destinies. So that the religious life is essentially and in detail a life of sacrifice.

But the life of the fervent servant of God in the world is none the less truly, in many of its details, a life of sacrifice. The selfish inclinations in us which make us prone to seek enjoyment rather than the hard performance of our duty and lead us to selfish pursuits rather than to the service of God, make sacrifice on our part constantly necessary in order that we may obey God rather than our own wishes and help our neighbor as well as attend to our own interests and pursuits.

It is this continual necessity of doing violence to ourselves, if we would serve God faithfully, which has wrung even from the saints such groanings of spirit. We sometimes think that their human nature was so completely subdued in all its rebellions

against the law of God that sacrifice and sorrow were things of little moment to them. It is true that in their transports of the love of God they were able to despise the yearnings of their nature and to renounce all things easily for the love of the All-beloved, but these transports did not endure forever, and it required a heroic constancy and the true spirit of sacrifice to enable them to go on against the promptings of their flesh and serve God by renouncing the whole world, its beauty, splendor, and desire.

Yet our progress in serving God and in bringing out our likeness to Christ depends in greatest measure on our capacity for self-sacrifice. The Saviour of us all, when He undertook the most arduous of all tasks—the salvation of a lost race and its lifting up again to heaven, chose the hard way of sacrifice, giving His own life at last as the supreme sacrifice for our redemption. We can not follow Him truly in any way save in the way of the cross, of daily sacrifice and self-denial. Let us search our conscience well and see whether we are indulging ourselves to the full in our whims, our fancies and de-

sires, or following Our Lord in the way of daily sacrifice. His word was not spoken lightly, and it remains true for all time and for every Christian: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me."

To begin with, one can not be doing more than one thing at once. Therefore, when we devote time to a religious duty, to helping our neighbor or promoting the good of some Catholic activity, we must necessarily be willing to forego the other and perhaps more alluring occupations which might have employed those hours spent in the service of God. Again, since His service often goes counter to our natural likes and dislikes, we must often do violence to ourselves to begin and perservere in the good we have resolved on. This is why some ill-advised people give as an excuse for not being more devout in the service of God that they "don't feel pious." The natural sluggishness of their heart, when it is a question of serving God, is used as an excuse for not serving Him. What these folk need is a bit of self-sacrifice to free them from the domination of their

feelings and set their will guiding them toward the service of God. They need to love the strong bread of self-denial, not the sweet milk of consoling feelings of devotion.

Again, there is in us all a natural sluggishness, which must be overcome before we can accomplish anything of value for earth or heaven. The inertia which is a property of all matter is also in some sense a property of our strange composite of spirit and of flesh. To bestir ourselves, particularly when there is question of spiritual things, is hard, and to let things take their course, to drift along and slur over or neglect our duty, "comes natural," as we say, to the sluggishness of our flesh.

Therefore, to do our duty by God and our neighbor we need the spirit of sacrifice to help us overcome this natural sluggishness and to set manfully about our task. That neglect of God's interests which many a one ascribes to "being too busy," or "not having the time," or "lacking the talent for such things," is, in reality, merely the want of a spirit of sacrifice, by which we might overcome every difficulty, apparent or real, and

give ourselves steadily to the service of God.

It is a rather hard thing to say, but we American Catholics have often been accused of a serious want of this spirit of sacrifice. We are a prosperous people, and we have many means of self-indulgence, and we live, as compared to our brethren in other countries, easy and comfortable lives. The multiplication of material comforts has, besides, a tendency to soften and enervate, and it begets a taste and a desire for pleasure which is the special enemy of this hardy spirit. So that our circumstances are unfavorable for the cultivation of the spirit of sacrifice.

Yet indeed, when one thinks again, we have powerful reasons enough to stir us up to a great spirit of self-sacrifice. There is immense need for us to exert ourselves, in ways that require much self-sacrifice, to work for right ethics, for clean living, for the spirit of religious freedom, for the conversion of America to the Faith, for Catholic education, for the saving of countless little children from the pollution of the slums, for the instruction of hundreds of thousands of them in the

Faith of their fathers, for the rescue of Catholic young men and women from the bad influences that surround them, for the organization of parishes, for the upbuilding of the Catholic press, for the aid of the missions (in such sore straits, because their former source of alms in Europe has been shut off by the war), for the whole cause of Catholic literature so necessary and so neglected—in a word, for all the vital and burning needs on supplying which the prosperity of the Church, and therefore of the nation, so greatly depends. We must battle for these things or we shall lose them. The forces of evil are arrayed and ready. To do our part in the fray we only need, and we do need most sorely, the generous spirit of sacrifice.

One looks abroad and sees a picked corps of generous and admirable soldiers of the Lord doing their utmost to meet these bitter needs. Their zeal is admirable, their energy is splendid. What fans their zeal and stirs their energy but the spirit of sacrifice? If they stopped to count their own interest and convenience, their work would forever remain undone. Then, alas, one sees another

and endlessly larger band of our Catholic people, who stand aloof and help not at all. They are well-to-do, God has blessed them in many ways, they have money, time, influence, social position, talent—why do they refuse to give any of these things to the cause of the Church? Is it not because they lack the spirit of sacrifice? Much as God has given them they need it all for themselves. They fight against the thought of the sacrifice and surrender of even a part of their possessions, because they have not learned the duty and the loveliness of sacrifice. Surely they have good cause, these self-indulgent followers of a crucified Saviour, to search their hearts and to pray for the spirit of sacrifice. For if they have so little a part in the cross of Christ, how shall they have a greater share in His crown?

EVERYBODY DOES

EVERY year, a host of pure-hearted, bright-eyed lads and maidens, in the first flush of their warm and generous youth, come thronging from our Catholic schools, and enter the ways of life.

Their hearts beat fast with promise and expectation. The glow of youth is all upon them and generous resolves are in their souls. The world seems to them a flowery meadow, and all about them is sunshine, and life appears to their eyes like a pleasant journey, over springing hills and through delightful valleys. They are young!

Alas, the hidden dangers that wait before their feet! There are so many pitfalls where the flowers lie thickest! There are so many dragons lurking in the happiest vales! And of all these dangerous creatures, one is most ravenous and savage—a dire beast whose cruel fangs have brought death and ruin to tens of thousands. Its name is: “Everybody does!”

When the innocent boys or girls put on

maturer ways, and come out into the world as men or women, this is the first temptation which they meet—"Everybody does!" They have been taught the strong, high, uncompromising principles of Christianity—that sin is a supreme and unimaginable evil, that goodness is precious above all things, that to trifle with temptations, to put one's self in unnecessary dangers, is to make friends with Hell.

But now the world about them whispers with a thousand voices that they must unlearn and forget these uncomfortable teachings. Now they must leave the Shrine of Christ and bow down before the Shrine of Human Respect—they must fall in with the crowd and follow the world and the flesh and the devil, because, well, "everybody does!"

They go into factory or workshop or office, and become uncomfortably aware that they are in a polluted and abhorrent air. Open speech or evil insinuation brings the blush to their cheeks. "Oh, you mustn't mind that sort of talk," some tempter tells them: "you'll soon be talking that way yourself;

‘everybody does!’ ” Drink and evil-living; cheating and shirking and all the passions that torment mankind, all rush upon them on the wings of that horrid dragon “everybody does.”

They go into society, and the same evil beast is lying in ambush for them. An unseemly fashion shocks their modesty. “Oh, you simply must get used to that; ‘everybody does!’ ” A dance outrages their instinctive sense of what is proper and becoming. Again they are told, “Oh, everybody does!” Everywhere, on all hands, the old excuse, the old false maxim of the world: “You must think it lawful, you must think it right, because ‘everybody does!’ ”

Let us forewarn our boys and girls betimes against this devouring beast of human respect. We need only repeat the warning given by the Saviour of Men two thousand years ago: “How narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth to life; and few there are that find it!”

How diametrically opposite is this teaching to the easy maxim of the world, “Do what everybody does!” Our Lord explicitly

warns us that to do what "everybody does" is to walk in the broad and easy way that leads to perdition.

If we wish to be His disciples, our way must be with the saints and heroes—not with the inglorious and sodden multitude, who flock like silly sheep where "everybody does!"

We speak much nowadays of preparing our boys and girls "for the world." What we must rather do, is to prepare them against the world. Times have not changed so much for the better, since the days of Our Lord, that we can afford to make a truce, and live in pleasant peace. The Prince of Peace spoke constantly of wars and of fighting. His followers are not better than their Master. Struggle and resistance to evil, is the appointed lot of every Christian all his days, to struggle against foes without, and foes within him.

It is only in the great victory of Heaven, that we shall be able, battle-worn conquerors, to lay down our arms and cease our vigilance.

Then, alone, in the company of the

blessed, it will be safe to let ourselves be carried on in the way of all our neighbors, and only in that blessed company shall we be secure in doing as "everybody does!"

THE SERVICE OF EMINENCE

AMONG the many fields of the lay apostolate, there is one that for its surpassing importance deserves to be taught to the young and honored by the old—the service, to wit, that the layman does to the Faith by becoming eminent in his calling while, at the same time, he keeps up the courageous practice of his Catholic faith and principle. When a man—or woman—unites to steadfast Catholicity distinguished service to the State or to his fellow-men, he gives a sublime service to the Church, and, in the minds of many men without the fold, his life is a great argument for the Faith.

All men are prone to imitate the honorably successful, and the pride men feel in a fellow-citizen's achievement in any worthy line of effort makes them ready to follow him in other things. Hence, the influence of an earnest Catholic, always strong for good, becomes manifold greater when he achieves success in the profession he has chosen. His good example in religious things

is livelier in its appeal because of his worldly eminence.

Our Lord in many ways preached humility and lowliness of heart; but He never preached either mediocrity or faint-heartedness. The true Catholic spirit, fostering, as it does, industry, self-control, honesty, and dutiful service, is the greatest help to achieving eminence in any pursuit. To be a true and thoroughgoing Catholic is one of the surest roads to eminence in any calling. Men are hindered from the path of exceptional achievement chiefly by their passions and their vices, their excesses or their defects; and the Faith and the sacraments teach them to curb the one and to correct the other. The humility that keeps a man from excellence would be a false humility and merely a masquerading; and sloth is one of the deadly sins. True goodness and true greatness mightily help one another. In our schools and in the home-training of the boys and girls who will make the Church of the next generation, we should try hard to stir them to a desire to be and do something more than the ordinary for the State and for their fel-

low-men and women, and we should fix also in their generous and impressionable hearts the conviction that it is a precious and effective sort of service to the Church to be at the same time a great Catholic and a great lawyer, doctor, author, priest, or citizen of any calling.

ONE MAN'S WAY

THIS is not a pious exaggeration, nor the fruit of fancy—it is a sober tale of fact. Let me tell it to you from the beginning.

I had just got into the railroad car, and was settling myself in the seat, when a strapping fellow with a pleasant, rosy face, leaned over from the opposite seat.

“Have half of my paper, Father?” said he.

I thanked him and pointed smilingly at my breviary. But after the office had been duly said, we fell to chatting together. In the course of our conversation, we came somehow or other to talking of Daily Communion, and the difficulty most people find in delaying their breakfast day after day, until they have heard Mass and received the Blessed Sacrament.

“Yes,” said he, “I found it so inconvenient, that, about eighteen months ago, I gave it up altogether.”

“Well, now,” quoth I, “that isn’t quite

right. It may be hard to go every day. But you should try to manage it sometimes. Do you live so far from the church?"

He turned and looked at me wonderingly.

"Oh," said he, "you misunderstand me. It wasn't the Daily Communion that I gave up. It was the breakfast."

"What," said I, "a hearty young fellow like you hasn't eaten his breakfast for eighteen months past?"

He nodded his head very vigorously.

"Upon my word," said he, "and I'll tell you how it happened. I went to work out in C—, and when I left home the folks kept reminding me that C— was a godless town and that if I didn't look out I'd take some harm there. So I began to go to Communion every day from the time I struck the place. I'd been used to eating a regular whopper of a breakfast, I tell you. My mother believed that the more you ate, the stronger you grew—and I stowed away so much, sometimes, that it was a wonder I held it. So I would start to Communion and then hurry back for breakfast, and then dash down to my work. And, I tell you, it made me sick.

"Then I got the notion of cutting out the breakfast altogether, and believe me, it worked like a charm. After a while I went back home and took a job in an ice plant, and I used to leave home every morning, breakfastless, and walk to church for Communion, then down to work, without ever thinking of breakfast again."

"Well, but didn't it pull you down?" said I, taking a glance at his rosy cheeks—which, to tell the truth, were as plump and solid as any one could wish.

"Look at me, Father," said he, "I've been doing the thing for eighteen months. When I started in, I weighed a hundred and forty-eight pounds, I now weigh a hundred and sixty or so, and I've walked my good five miles a day, to and from the office."

"Haven't you ever been sick?" said I.

"Sick?" cried he. "Not a minute!"

I have set down our conversation very plainly, as you see, from the notes, which I made instantaneously on the edge of my time-table. This young fellow was telling the plain truth, as I know from other sources, as well as from his own honest word.

If I should add all the enthusiastic things he said of the spiritual benefit he felt from Daily Communion, I should take up as much space again as this. How very true it is that where there is a will there is a way—though the way may not be always the one which this pink-faced young business man has discovered for himself of solving the problem of the Eucharistic Fast.

UNCOMFORTABLE PEOPLE

“**F**ATHER, do you know I feel uncomfortable sometimes?” said an alert young business man to me not long ago. “I wish you’d analyze the trouble for me—it seems to me that I’m a little out of joint in the spiritual line.”

“What are the symptoms?” said I, smiling.

“There aren’t any—that is just the trouble. If I were wicked, I’d try to reform. But as it is, I can’t find out what’s the matter. I’m a pretty decent sort of fellow as the world goes—I don’t do anything very wrong. I don’t steal, I don’t harm any one, I never do anything that I have to feel very much ashamed of—I go to Mass, Sunday, and all that—but confound it, every once in a while the thought comes to me that my goodness is all negative. I’m not doing anything for the next world.”

“Perhaps the matter is,” said I, “that you are giving all your time and thought and energy to yourself and your own people,

and are doing little or nothing for God and your neighbor."

He looked at me with a startled air.

"Good gracious, Father!" said he, "what can I do for God or my neighbor? I've got to hustle to support the family! With five little mouths to fill, a man can't work over-time at being a missionary!"

"You asked me a plain question," said I, "and I'm giving you a plain answer. You asked me why you feel uncomfortable at times, and I answer—because you're only working for yourself, and doing nothing for other people.

"You remember the picture Our Lord draws in the Gospel, of the Last Judgment, and the sentence which is to be passed on mankind? It seems to me that His words answer your difficulty very neatly. He does not speak of great crimes, nor heinous wickedness. It is obvious that men are to be tried and punished for these things. But He tells us that we shall also be called to account for the way in which we helped, or failed to help our neighbor. 'I was hungry and you gave Me not to eat; thirsty and you gave Me not

to drink; sick, and in prison and you did not visit Me.' Your own uneasiness of mind comes from a half-conscious conviction that you are not doing enough to satisfy this part of the general judgment—which will have to do with your good deeds toward your fellow-man."

He looked at me in silence.

"I don't think, though," said I, "that you're solitary in that feeling. There are, I am sure, some five hundred thousand good Catholics, men and women, here in America who have the same uncomfortable feeling, from time to time. They feel they are not doing enough for their neighbor and for the Church. But they answer as you do: 'I have no time.'

"Our Lord puts it in a very strong way in the Gospel. In the light of His words, to say that you haven't time for your neighbor and the Church simply means, 'I haven't time for Christ.' "

He shrugged his shoulders uneasily. "What can we busy people do?" said he.

"You busy people can do more than any one else. You mix with the world. You

have some influence with your fellows. You see the state of morals, and the needs of the poor. A word from you at the right time will do much to check abuses, right wrongs, encourage down-hearted fellows, check the beginner in rascality, encourage the good and scare the evil. You can give advice of some worth to the youngsters. You can give a bit of money to many a good undertaking, and your example will move others to do likewise. You need not be a fanatic," I went on, taking the meaning of his gesture. "You need not be conspicuous. All you need do is to take a charitable opportunity as you take a business opportunity—do the good that offers—use the openings that lie around you."

"Oh, but somehow," said he, "to come right down to it, these charitable things seem somehow to be the property of priests and nuns—they're none of my business."

"They're every one's business," said I, "who has to pass the general judgment and to hear the sentence, 'As long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it to Me.'"

BECAUSE YOU ARE A CATHOLIC

BECAUSE you are a Catholic—what? Should you be more timid, more apologetic, than the any-religion man or the no-religion man? Of course not. You have heard God speak and you know. They haven't and they speculate and wonder. Is it any nobler or more independent to speculate and wonder than to *know*?

Not a trace, then, in your thoughts or actions, of weak timidity or silly apologizing. What should be the attitude of a Catholic man or woman? A nice, careful and modest balance between pride on the one side and timidity upon the other. You should have the gentle confidence, the courteous kindness, the balance and poise and precision of those who *know*.

No bragging nor blustering nor swagger because you know. It is no credit to *you* that you know, while so many (better perhaps than yourself) can only speculate and wonder. If they knew as you do, they might be better Catholics than you are.

On the other hand, no false timidity nor shrinking from the confession of your Faith. Having the truth of God, you should wear it on your forehead. A man (or woman) who knows, must not only think the truths of the Faith, he must live them, and speak them by his actions. To be a Catholic and to be an evil liver is, in a certain sense, to do injury to the truth. You say one thing and you do another.

Finally, your knowledge of the truth of the Faith imposes on you the duty of being well informed on the teachings of that Faith. If you truly believe that God has spoken, doubtless you will be careful to learn what He has spoken, for nothing is so precious nor so noble as the word of God.

The truth and beauty of the Faith are not yours as a selfish possession for your own mere personal good. They are a precious charge which you must convey to others and which you will have to answer for hereafter. Our Lord came on earth to kindle a fire, and it is you who must help carry the brands abroad. If you are ill-instructed in your Faith, you either do not believe that it is the

Word of God or you will not take the trouble to find out just what God has said. There is a third possibility, that you can not get instruction. But that is negligible now, when the printed word is everywhere.

To be at the same time humble and brave, gentle and courageous, to know one's faith well, to live it out devotedly, and to give generously of the truth to other men, this is the vocation of every Christian. Do not compare yourself with the world about you. You are the salt of the earth, the light of the world, a city seated on a mountain, and you can not be hid. For shame or for glory, you have been given by God a priceless treasure which has not been given to most other men. You must account for it, you must use it well. Not to use it at all, is to abuse it most dreadfully. Your gratefulness for the gift must shine out in your use of it.

THE MAN OF ONE TALENT

PERHAPS you undervalue your own importance in the scheme of things. It is a common failing and a comfortable one. "I do not matter much, either way," says Idleness. "If I work hard, I can accomplish little. If I don't work at all, the loss will never be felt. How dear is sweet tranquillity!" So he sits by and dreams or criticises.

Such a man or woman does dishonor to Almighty God and to human nature. God meant us to be individually insignificant, and to do great things together. Our individual insignificance is precious, because it enables us to co-operate, to supplement and strengthen the work of other men. It is the common, insignificant people who are indispensable in everyday affairs. God meant it so, and whoever is discouraged at his own insignificance or will not use the little which he has, quarrels with the evident plans of God.

Our Lord, who understood perfectly the

needs of men, and had all history before His eyes, gives a significant turn to one of His parables. He tells us of some servants whose master was about to leave for a journey, and gave each of them a certain sum of money to traffic with while he was away.

One received five talents, another two, another only one. Now, the significant detail for us just now is this—that the man who received only one talent was the one who lost heart and went off and hid his money in a napkin. The other two traded industriously and pleased their master on his return with gain. But the silly fellow who had only one talent, hid his away—and he was bitterly punished by his angry lord.

Perhaps you have very little influence. Perhaps you see few opportunities of doing any one good. Perhaps you are one of those who have received only a single talent. Then clearly you are in especial danger. You are precisely the one at whom the parable points. Use what you have, do the good you can, join yourself with your neighbors and share in their good works. Never say,

“I do not matter.” You do matter greatly. The master, who is away on a journey, will return very soon and ask, “Where is the talent which I gave you?”

JUST GOING TO

IF ALL good folk, by a common impulse, would suddenly forswear procrastination, and begin at once the good and helpful things they have been planning, the sad face of the earth would smile with noble deeds! But how many good resolves waste away and vanish because the resolvers are content with merely "going to."

"I'm going to help you work, some of these days," they say to the over-burdened manager of some charitable enterprise. "I'm going to begin to visit the hospital," they assure themselves with generous emotion, "or help along some Catholic publications, or take an interest in poor children." But day by day and month by month they flounder in the slough of "going to."

They are going to write that kindly letter, going to bring about that reconciliation, and cheer that discouraged man or woman, and warn that youngster from the slippery paths.

But the slow hours go on, and these well-

meaning resolvers are still "just going to."

If you have a store of such good, but long-deferred, intentions lingering about the corners of your memory, clear them away by instant resolution. See how many of them you can begin to put in practice this very day.

The tiny good we actually do is worth a peck of dreamy resolutions. Do to-day what, all last year, you were "just going to," and all the year you will scatter blessings.

MAKE BELIEVE

THERE is a game children love to play all over the world—children of a lesser and of a larger growth. For want of a better name—for it has no name—we shall call it, “Let’s just pretend.”

Now, the way the lesser children play the game is this. In the intervals of more boisterous sport, when their limbs are weary, or the day is rainy, or when they are all gathered about the fireside at night, one will say to the other, in an inviting way: “Let’s just pretend—let’s pretend that we are soldiers, or giants or fairy princes. Let’s pretend that this lounge is an enchanted castle and you be the sleeping beauty, and I’ll be a brave young knight and set you free—let’s pretend——.” So their fertile young fancies run along, until the solid world of facts, with its uncomfortable realities and uncompromising limitations, has vanished quite away, and they are floating on the very clouds of a fairy land of make believe!

This is all well enough for children, and

a good old game, to be encouraged and smiled upon. It wakes their young imagination, and whiles away many a weary hour. But have you ever thought how many—how very many—older folk are foolishly busy playing at this childish game “let’s pretend”? How many sad, dismal failures for this world and the next begin with these unhappy words, acted, alas, not spoken! How many melancholy follies have their origin in our sad fondness for make believe.

When men and women come out from the mists of childhood, the soft outlines of the world grow stern and hard about them. Right and wrong, with the vast chasm that divides them, rise up in unmistakable distinctness, menacing and clear. The narrow path of duty, sometimes rude and rocky beneath their feet, stretches wearily on, while the pleasant places seem somehow all forbidden. The way of truth, justice, duty is woefully uninviting, steep and hard.

Oh, then to many a man and woman come tremblings of the heart and childish questionings. “Why should I do all these unpleasant things? Why should I make my-

self unhappy with duties, when pleasures are so easy, so inviting, and so near?" Then comes the tempting speculation: "How shall I get rid of all these rules, these obligations, this strict watch upon my passions, this firm control over my heart? How?—ah!—let's just pretend! Let's pretend, O my soul, that there is no God, no hell, no heaven! Let's pretend that this charming, satisfying earth is everything. Let's pretend that life will endure forever—no illness, no pain, no sorrow for our share, only at last a sleep and a forgetting. Let's pretend that man is, after all, his own sufficient master, and meant but to do his own sweet will, in his own goodly world. Let's pretend!"

Look about you, and see how many, many sadly foolish men and women spend their best days pretending, in a fool's paradise, all wrapped about with rosy dreams. This man has a great deal of money stored in a vault. (Remember, in very truth, it is only so much yellow metal out of a mine); or a great deal loaned at interest; (so many letters on a parchment, or so many figures written in a ledger.) He has done many evil

things, it may be, to win this gold, and he is pretending that it is all his own, and an earnest of great happiness! Poor, foolish dreamer! Soon, when he dies, he will be rudely waked from his pretending. The hard hand of death, which takes no bribes, and which never yet delayed an instant because of gold or goods or learning, will steal all his metal or his scrip away, and drag his naked soul before an All-just God! What foolish, mad pretending!

Here is another—a silly woman, who is pretending with all her might that pleasure, fashion, and popularity will bring her peace and contentment of the heart. She is fairly giddy with the pursuit of this teasing pleasure—which leads her about as though it were a swift-winged moth eluding its pursuer. She goes here, goes there, tries this excitement, then tries that—always with a momentary satiety—then that increasing emptiness of spirit and fierce hunger of the heart. She is pretending that she is happy, pretending that her heart is glad; pretending! Ah, there was never happiness in yielding to one's passions—only feverish remorse, and

an unhealthy thirst for worse indulgence. Why pretend, and why deceive your soul? But she loves her own delusion—she will not be enlightened; like a peevish child she will keep up her ruinous playing and pretending to the bitter end!

There, again, is the man who has bought honor and advancement at the cost of principle. He is pretending, too. He is pretending that he has made a good exchange, that his empty and passing preferment is worth the stupendous price he paid. He is pretending that he has somehow saved his honor, pretending that he will avoid the coming retribution. What silly, light-brained child ever pretended more foolishly than he?

There is no end to this vain pretending. Men pretend that one religion is as good as the next—as if one's religion were not of as much importance as one's coat. They pretend that morality is only a matter of custom, as if conscience and remorse were only an idle whim. They pretend that miracles have gone out of the world, or that there were never miracles at all, as if true men's sacred word and oath were to be lightly held

or disbelieved, or as if God had suddenly grown old and weak of hand, and could not interfere with the world He built so wonderfully out of the star-dust.

The gravest and most serious-seeming are, alas, quite often most ready solemnly to pretend. They band themselves together in powerful assemblies, to pretend the more. They exhort and encourage and applaud and egg on one another, to pretend with the more consummate daring, and to bring greater and greater throngs of men to the same manner of pretending as themselves. "Let's just pretend," they seem to say to one another, at their gravest gatherings, and he who suggests some new fantasy of opinion, or some more outlandish theory, gains a glory above all the rest.

But do they change the cold, enduring, solid realities of things, these gray-haired theorizers, with their solemn and vain pretending? No more than does the golden-headed little lad at play. He may live for an hour in a world where broomsticks are horses, or his row of blocks a knightly army, but when his father's voice calls him away,

his playthings are but blocks and broomsticks still. No harm to the lad, he has had his innocent hour of dreaming—but how acutely sad is the plight of those elder dreamers who persist in distorting the momentous facts of life on which hang questions of right and wrong. Their immortal souls depend on their discovering somehow the vain emptiness of their dreaming—yet they are bent, heart and soul, on keeping up the delightful dream. They wear out their lives in an unreal delusion. They are gone mad with make believe! Let us hope and pray that in some happy hour their Father's voice may rouse them from their ruinous play.

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